

Study cites health hazards at Israel's Dimona nuclear facility

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — A study by Israeli researchers found that dozens of workers at the top secret Dimona nuclear facility developed cancer after being routinely exposed to plutonium and other radioactive elements, press reports said Sunday.

The Haaretz newspaper said the study by researchers at the Hebrew University schools of law and medicine was based on the medical records of 39 Dimona employees who developed cancer and interviews with some of them.

Urine tests conducted on the employees found they had

been exposed to the radioactive elements plutonium 239, uranium, iodine 131 and cesium, as well as such toxic heavy metals as nickel, chrome and lead.

Twenty-four of the employees had died since the start of the study, it said.

Employees reported numerous incidents which led to the exposure to carcinogens, including what the report called almost daily outbreaks of uranium fires at Dimona, located in the Negev Desert of southern Israel.

The Dimona facility is cloaked in heavy secrecy and Israeli censorship laws prohib-

it publication of any details of work at the site. Foreign press reports say Israel has built between 100 and 200 nuclear weapons at Dimona.

According to the Hebrew University findings, some of which were recently published in the U.S. journal "Environmental Health Perspectives," employees also complained of a shortage of protective equipment at Dimona.

The plant was built in the 1950s and the researchers said in their report that safety measures and medical care had been improved significantly since the early years of its operation.

Relatives of employees who contracted cancer and other illnesses while working at Dimona have been fighting for years for compensation from the state.

According to Israeli press reports, a court in October ordered the government to pay \$700,000 to the family of one victim of radiation at the plant.

The Tel Aviv court accused the management of the Dimona centre of "having treated the needs of employees for protection with contempt," describing their attitude as "revolting," the reports said.

Algeria attackers cut throats of six; 18 rebels killed — papers

PARIS (R) — Suspected Islamist rebels in Algeria cut the throats of four blind people and two civilians accompanying them on Saturday night, Algerian security forces said Sunday.

In a statement on the official Algerian news agency APS, they said: "Six people, of whom four were blind, were assassinated in a cowardly way by a group of criminals during the night of March 7 to 8."

Algerian officials use the expressions "in a cowardly way" to mean by having their throats cut. They also routinely describe Islamist rebels as "criminals" or "terrorists."

The statement said the six died in Haouch Menaa district of Boufarik in Blida province, 25 kilometres south of Algiers.

Earlier on Sunday, Algerian newspapers reported that

troops had killed 18 Islamist guerrillas in operations in three provinces and that attackers had cut the throats of six more shepherds.

Eight rebels were killed on Friday in the western province of Mascara. Eight others were shot dead in two operations in Medea south of Algiers on Friday and Saturday, Al Watan and Le Matin dailies said.

Troops also shot dead two rebels in Sour Al Ghazlane area, 70 kilometres south of Algiers, said La Tribune.

Algerian newspapers have now reported that more than 300 rebels have been killed in renewed military operations following the massacres of more than 1,200 civilians from late December to the end of January.

The authorities have confirmed the killings of some 40 rebels in those operations through rare security force

statements or through state-run television displaying bloodied bodies of bearded men.

In Medea province, a hotbed of violence, attackers cut the throats of six shepherds, La Tribune newspaper said on Saturday.

The killing of the six men, for which the newspaper gave no date, brought to more than 30 the number of shepherds murdered in the past four months. Most died in the western provinces of Sidi Bel Abbas, Tlemcen, the southwestern region of Saïda and in Medea area.

Killing the shepherds appears to serve a dual purpose, according to Algerian commentators. Their flocks are stolen to provide food for the guerrilla forces, while their deaths ensure they cannot tip off security forces about guerrilla movements.

Moroccan king refusing contact with Netanyahu — report

TEL AVIV (AFP) — King Hassan of Morocco has sternly rebuffed suggestions he meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and told an envoy he did not even want to hear from the headline Israeli leader, a newspaper reported Sunday.

"In the very near future I'll refuse to receive letters from this man," King Hassan told Israel's representative in Rabat, David Dadoo, the mass circulation Yediot Aharanot reported.

The monarch's sharp message was delivered after King Hassan met early this year with an opposition member of Israel's parliament, Rafi Edri, who brought him a letter from Mr. Netanyahu dealing with the deadlocked peace negotiations with the Palestinians, Yediot said.

At their meeting, King Hassan rebuffed a request passed on by Edri for a summit meeting with Mr. Netanyahu, the newspaper said.

King Hassan, viewed as one of the more moderate leaders in the Arab world, initiated a rapprochement with Israel under the former Labour government but effectively froze the process after Netanyahu's right-wing coalition came to power in June 1996.

According to the Yediot Aharanot, King Hassan recently told persons in his entourage, "I'm not prepared to meet with this man, with Netanyahu, I watched him on CNN, his body language projects aggression, something violent."



A man covers his head from stones hurled by protesters Sunday during a clash between protesters and police in central Istanbul. Riot police used batons and teargas to disperse hundreds of people attending a Women's Day demonstration backed by the country's main Kurdish party (Reuters photo)

Turkish police teargas Women's Day demonstration

ISTANBUL (R) — Police used batons and teargas Sunday to disperse hundreds of people attending a Women's Day demonstration in Istanbul backed by Turkey's main Kurdish party.

"This is an illegal demonstration," a police officer using a loud-hailer told the crowd of some 600 from behind lines of riot police and armoured cars. A helicopter hovered overhead.

"There are some provocateurs among you who are using Women's Day to start trouble with the police," he said.

The demonstrators, many of them wearing the traditional Kurdish colours of red, green and yellow, threw sticks and stones, when riot police charged and fired teargas canisters.

Witnesses said some police and demonstrators were injured in the clash in the central Taksim Square. Arrests were made, but it was not clear how many.

The demonstrators dropped banners and flags supporting the People's Democratic Party (Hadeep), Turkey's main Kurdish political group, and ran into side streets, pursued by

police. Car and shop windows were smashed in the running scuffles.

"Long live March 8," read one banner in Turkish and Kurdish. "Stop torture in detention," said another in Turkish.

Elsewhere in Istanbul, a larger meeting for Women's Day passed without incident.

A demonstration in Diyarbakir, capital city of the mainly-Kurdish southeast, broke up peacefully, witnesses said.

A Turkish prosecutor last month charged seven senior

Hadeep members, including party leader Murat Bozlak, with having links to separatist Kurdish rebels. The seven face a maximum of 15 years in jail.

Turkey refuses to grant minority rights to its approximately 10 million Kurds, drawing criticism from Western countries concerned by human rights abuses.

Most complaints of rights abuses stem from a 13-year-old conflict between security forces and Kurdish rebels fighting for self-rule in the southeast. More than 27,000 have died.

Algeria customs strike paralyses ports

PARIS (R) — Customs agents have gone on strike in Algeria to protest at efforts by police to disarm them, causing paralysis at seaports and airports, the customs union and other officials said Sunday.

The general strike started on Saturday and a customs union representative said it had paralysed port and airport traffic.

He would not say whether it had had any impact on oil and gas exports, which earn Algeria more than 95 per cent of its foreign currency. These are

normally cleared by customs based in the export outlets.

"The protest strike has brought traffic and business in Algeria to the ground, like many other ports and airports across the country," said one senior customs official, speaking by telephone from Algiers.

Customs union officials said the police move to disarm customs officers added another layer to the violence in Algeria on Saturday, when one customs officer was shot dead by a policeman in the coastal town of Bejaia, 180 kilometres east

of Algiers.

They said he was killed after resisting a policeman's efforts to disarm him.

It was not known when or by whom the police had been decided.

"We have no firm word about why the police moved to disarm customs," one customs official said.

The government has made no comment on the reported strike.

Customs agents are paramilitaries under the control of the finance ministry.

Two Hamas members sentenced to prison

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — An Israeli military court sentenced two members of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) to prison on Sunday for planning to kidnap Israeli soldiers.

The two 20-year-old men,

both from the village of Sur Baher outside Jerusalem, confessed to belonging to Hamas and planning the kidnappings, court officials said.

The military court in Lod, outside Tel Aviv, sentenced Khaled Abed Rabbo to 21 months in prison and a 27-

month suspended sentence, while his colleague Majed Bakir received 19 months.

The two men, arrested several months ago, received relatively light sentences because they confessed and expressed regret for their actions, court officials said.

Iraq 'laundering money to buy weapons' — report

LONDON (AFP) — Iraq is using a sophisticated network of offshore companies and Latin American banks to buy weapons and military equipment in violation of United Nations sanctions, a British press report said on Sunday.

The Sunday Telegraph, which did not cite any sources, said that hundreds of millions of dollars each year were being channelled out of Iraq through the Middle East and Latin America to pay for arms and military equipment.

The weekly broadsheet said

some equipment was understood to be purchased for Iraq's nuclear weapons programme.

It said the process started with the Iraqi central bank sending large quantities of dinars, the national currency, overland to Jordan, to be converted into dollars.

The money is then transferred by various means to financial institutions in Latin America — Argentina and Uruguay are the two most favoured destinations — where it is deposited in the

accounts of local businessmen who have agreed to cooperate in return for a hefty commission, the Telegraph said.

Once the funds are deposited in accounts not identified with Baghdad, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is free to proceed with his procurement programme to build up Iraq's military capability, the newspaper reported.

It said the money-laundering operation was being masterminded by key figures in Iraq's military establishment who have been identified with

attempts to develop its missiles and nuclear weapons capabilities.

A number of Iraqi front companies have been opened in the Cypriot port of Limasol to oversee the smuggling operation, the Telegraph said.

Beirut is a popular route, as Baghdad's recent thaw in relations with Damascus means secret weapons consignments can be taken overland from Beirut through Syria and on to Iraq without risk of U.N. detection, it added.

Top U.S. general meets Saudi crown prince

RIYADH (AFP) — General Henry Hugh Shelton, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, held talks with Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz here Sunday, the official news agency SPA said.

It said that Gen. Shelton, who arrived in Riyadh late Saturday, also met the Saudi armed forces chief of staff,

General Salah Ben Ali Al Muhayya.

A U.S. embassy spokeswoman, meanwhile, said that the top U.S. general would likewise meet with American troops stationed in the Gulf Arab kingdom during his two-day visit.

"This is a visit that was planned some time ago. It is his first to the region as chair-

man of the joint chiefs," said Elizabeth Thornhill. The Pentagon has also said Gen. Shelton's tour of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Egypt was long scheduled, but it comes as a huge U.S. force has been kept in the Gulf to await a test of Iraq's implementation of a U.N. accord on arms inspections.

Before the Feb. 23 accord

which headed off the threat of U.S. military action, Saudi Arabia ruled out the use of its territory, where around 100 U.S. planes are based near Riyadh, to launch attacks on Iraq.

Under an operation named "Southern Watch," U.S. aircraft in Saudi Arabia help patrol a "no-fly" zone over southern Iraq.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

16:10 The World of Peter Rabbit and Friends
16:30 French Programmes
18:00 Riding High
18:30 Drama — Neighbours
19:00 The Journal
19:15 Doc. — Cinq Sur Cinq
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Hope and Gloria
20:00 Documentary — Perspective
20:30 The American Chart Show
21:10 Marker
22:00 News in English
22:30 Law and Order
23:05 Bay Watch Nights
23:59 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:33 Fair
05:50 (Sunrise) Doha
11:46 Dhuhr
15:07 Asr
17:42 Maghreb
18:59 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.

4622366 Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4651932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church 771331

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Temperatures are expected to rise

slightly, skies partly cloudy to sunny, and winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be warm, skies partly cloudy to sunny, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 06/16
Aqaba 12/23
Deserts 05/19
Jordan Valley 10/22

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 14, Aqaba 21 Humidity readings: Amman 54 per cent, Aqaba 41 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Abbas Al Hakim 885446
Dr. Arafat Al Ashhab 5602507
Dr. Ayman Al Muhaseb 875748
Dr. Jamal Jbarah 847351
Firas pharmacy 5661912
Fardows pharmacy 778336
Al Asena pharmacy 4637055
Naioukh pharmacy 4623672
Al Salam pharmacy 4636790
Yacoub pharmacy 4644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 4637660

Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Mazen Abu Bakir 278770
Al Quds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Ya'qub Al Khatib 991772
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 7731111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdli 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 836813, 850856
Luzelle 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4644281/6
Akileh Maternity 4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5661646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50
Amal Hospital 5674155
ZARQA:
Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)99099
IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02)247100

QAABA:

Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15 Sanaa (RJ)
08:25 Damascus (RJ)
08:35 Jeddah (RJ)
09:15 New Delhi (RJ)
09:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
16:20 Cairo (RJ)
16:25 London (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

18:05 Kuwait (RJ)
18:35 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
18:45 Brussels (add) (RJ)
19:00 Bangkok (RJ)
01:50 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
02:50 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
03:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

04:15 London (BA)
09:15 Cairo (MS)
12:00 Khartoum (SD)
13:25 Bahrain (GF)
14:30 Doha (QR)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
16:00 Dubai (EK)
18:00 Istanbul (SD)
20:00 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:30 Athens (OA)
01:25 Amsterdam (KL)

Royal Wings (RW)

06:05 Tel Aviv (RW)
07:25 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
07:15 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
09:50 Aqaba (RW)
22:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

06:20 Beirut (RJ)
08:00 Brussels (add) (RJ)
10:10 Frankfurt, London (RJ)
11:00 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:05 Kuwait (RJ)
12:30 Cairo (RJ)
20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:40 Damascus (RJ)
20:45 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
21:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
21:15 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
22:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
22:45 Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights

06:00 Istanbul (TK)
08:25 London (BA)
10:30 Al Arish (PF)
10:30 Cairo (MS)
13:20 Istanbul (SD)
14:15 Bahrain (GF)
15:50 Doha (QR)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
17:00 Damascus, Dubai (EK)
19:00 Khartoum (SD)
21:20 Tel Aviv (LY)
23:55 Damascus, Paris (AF)
02:25 Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)

05:30 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
06:50 Tel Aviv (RW)
07:55 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
08:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
10:20 Aqaba (RW)
11:40 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
20:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50 Aqaba (RW)

Princess Basma commends work of women's groups

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Sunday commended the work of Jordanian women's groups, saying that their relentless efforts to improve the status of women have resulted in numerous achievements.

In an address to a roundtable meeting organised by the Jordanian National Committee for Women (JNCW) to mark International Women's Day, the Princess said it is of vital importance for these women's groups to continue their efforts at all levels in order to maximise the gains and enable women to deal with the challenges of the coming century.

"I am confident that tomorrow will be better than today for women and that the future holds greater prospects for Jordanian women in all regions," she said.

"For the first time in Jordan's history, women-related issues and the main objectives of the national strategy on women have been incorporated in the country's 1998-2002 five-year socio-economic development plan," Princess Basma added.

The plan calls for Jordanian women to make their own contributions to and participate in decision-making on issues concerning women.

Stating that these steps are considered a major achievement for the JNCW and a crucial step toward further future gains, Princess Basma said much credit in this respect should go to Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf and heads of various women sectors.

The Princess said the roundtable was focusing on the role of women in four basic issues: education, public life, employment and population affairs.

However, she pointed out that setting targets for the future is not enough and that women groups are called on to find an appropriate practical mechanism to define women's roles.

In her address to the meeting, Dr. Khalaf pointed out that women's participation in socio-economic development affairs rose from 6.6 per cent in 1991 to 8.5 per cent in 1997 and that the percentage of women in the Jordanian workforce rose from 13.4 per cent to 15.6 per cent in the same period of time.

Referring to education, the minister said illiteracy among women dropped from 22.8 per cent in 1991 to 13.3 per cent at present.

But she said Jordanian women have a long way to go in order to achieve equality with men, especially in political and economic decision-making.

Amal Sabbagh, the JNCW secretary general, reviewed the committee's activities and achievements.

She said the activities marking International Women's Day came upon Princess Basma's directives and were designed to further promote the status and role of women in Jordanian society.

Queen inaugurates women's information centre

AMMAN (J.T.) — On the occasion of International Women's Day, Her Majesty Queen Noor Sunday inaugurated the National Information Centre for Women at the headquarters of the General Federation of Jordanian Women (GFJW) in Amman, according to a press release.

Queen Noor, who is honorary president of the GFJW, emphasised the importance of a "centralised information base, which would provide comprehensive data on the family, cultural, economic, social and political status of Jordanian women."

She expressed her hope that the centre would be a national resource that will complement the efforts of all those who are involved in women's affairs in the country and that it would be the first step towards the establishment of a regional database centre on Arab women, the statement continued.

In her speech, GFJW President Nujoud Fawzi said the centre, which is the first of its kind in Jordan and the Arab World, comprises a research unit, a comprehensive interactive library with audio-visual aids and access to the Internet, as well as a consultation and information department. The latter will provide researchers, planners and women with information on national, regional and international organisations concerned with women's affairs, the statement read.

Mrs. Fawzi concluded by thanking the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for funding the establishment of the centre and the Ministry of Planning and the Amman mayor for their support.

USAID Director Lewis Lucke noted that the "development and implementation of information centres for women are activities [that] grew out of resolutions adopted at the 1995 U.N. Beijing Conference on Women." He added that "this pioneering step being undertaken by the General Federation... will enable them to monitor policies and laws, which affect women and to build the necessary network for Jordanian women to have access to information which concerns them."

The GFJW was established in 1981 as a national non-governmental organisation (NGO) of women's associations, societies and individuals to enhance the political, economic and social status of women in Jordan.

The federation offers education opportunities, vocational training and guidance in family welfare and health. It also advocates reform favouring women and initiates income-generating activities in collaboration with other NGOs, including the Noor Al Hussein Foundation, the announcement said.

Attending the ceremony with the Queen were Minister of Social Development Mohammad Khair



Her Majesty Queen Noor is greeted Sunday after inaugurating the new National Information Centre for Women in Amman on International Women's Day. The centre, the first of its kind in the Arab World, will provide comprehensive information on the family, cultural, social and political status of Jordanian women (Reuters photo)

pull together to form a pressure group to work for the creation of new laws aimed at ending all forms of discrimination against women."

According to the report, Queen Noor also signed a petition calling for international support of the women under Taliban rule in Afghanistan.

Mansur, Minister of Youth and Culture Talal Hassan, Senator Subhiyyeh Ma'ani, the Queen's social policy advisor, In'am Mufti, NHF Executive Director Sima Bahous and other officials.

Also Sunday, the Queen was quoted by AFP as telling the Arabic daily Al Arab Al Yawm that "active women in Jordan should

Symposium examines methods of improving spoken language skills

By Jumana Abu Hannoud
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — With a view to improving the fluency of foreign language students, one of the most difficult challenges facing teachers, the National Orthodox School last week held its Fourth English Symposium on English Language Teaching entitled "Promoting Oral Fluency Skills."

According to Mai Goussous, creator and organiser of the symposium, the main objective this year was to "find a new methodology in teaching by using effective, innovative, and practical skills and activities to encourage our students to speak up and express themselves in English, even in large classes."

These activities were designed by teachers to help other teachers and students bridge the gap between written mechanical exercises and fluency in spoken English. Mrs. Goussous told the Jordan Times.

The symposium was conducted in the form of workshops held simultaneously in separate rooms so that participants could choose according to their own preferences and needs.

Mrs. Goussous said 22 papers were presented by speakers from private schools, private universities and the University of Jordan. There also was an English language teaching (ELT) book exhibition, which placed a "special emphasis" on "teacher resource books."

She explained that the papers presented offered unique techniques for developing oral fluency skills, including dancing and music, drama, communicative scenarios, games, story telling and songs.

She said special attention was paid to the difficulties facing students who cannot improve their oral communication skills because of their inability to receive written information correctly or easily. These "children of a lesser fortune," as one of the papers termed these special students, were also included in the activities created and presented at the symposium.

Participants included teachers and supporting educational organisations, such as the British Council and the American Center, who evaluated the workshops. The ideas presented will later be tested by the teachers at school and the results will be followed up.

A new theme is chosen each year to suit educational needs and requirements as determined by teachers and the organisers to help improve English language teaching and overcome the difficulties students and teachers face at school.

Jordan, Yemen sign medical cooperation agreement

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian and Yemeni health ministers Sunday concluded three days of meetings by signing an agreement to implement a bilateral protocol on health-related affairs.

Visiting Yemeni Health Minister Abdul Wali Nasher, who signed the agreement with his counterpart Ashraf Kurdi, said the accord provides for specific steps to implement the protocol and promote cooperation in medical and health affairs.

Dr. Nasher said the agreement contains a number of clauses concerning treatment of Yemeni patients in Jordanian hospitals and the export of Jordanian drugs and provision of medical expertise to Yemen.

Between 80 and 100 Yemeni citizens annually visit Jordan for medical treatment, Dr. Nasher noted.

Following the signing ceremony at the University of Jordan Hospital, Dr. Kurdi said he and the Yemeni minister discussed a number of issues related to health and medical cooperation.

The bilateral protocol will enable Yemeni students to acquire a medical education in the Kingdom and Yemeni doctors to receive further training here, he stated.

Dr. Kurdi said a medical team will soon be sent to the Yemeni health ministry to offer its services, and there are plans to send more doctors.

During his stay here, Dr. Nasher toured Al Bashir Hospital, Al Hussein Medical Centre and the University of Jordan Hospital, where he discussed ways for Yemen to benefit from Jordanian experiences.

Also Sunday, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali received the Yemeni minister and Dr. Kurdi, who briefed him on the agreement.

Dr. Majali expressed Jordan's interest in providing Yemen with all possible assistance in primary health care and reviewed bilateral cooperation.

Palestinian affairs department holds workshop on refugee camp improvement programme

AMMAN (J.T.) — The director of the Palestinian Affairs Department, Ibrahim Badran, Sunday emphasised that a government-sponsored plan for modernising Palestinian refugee camps does not mean settling the refugees permanently in Jordan.

At the opening session of a special workshop focusing on the implementation of the "social productivity programme," Dr. Badran said the plan is designed to improve the living conditions of camps residents, who are part of Jordanian society.

Dr. Badran said the government is placing great hopes on this programme, which his department plans to carry out in conjunction with the Ministry of Planning and the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC), in order to provide a better living environment for the refugees.

The workshop was organised to orient the programme's employees on its technical, social and engineering aspects. The plan, due to begin by the second half of this year, is part of an overall JD431 million government social safety programme scheduled to be carried out over a period of several years.

Ghailth Fariz, from the Ministry of Planning, said the programme aims at enabling local communities to acquire appropriate training in certain areas so that they may be more productive.

The government has allocated funds for combating poverty and unemployment, and this programme is part of the whole government-sponsored plan, he pointed out.

According to the department, the programme will cost JD44 million and will focus on improving the camps' infrastructure, social development capacity, and small-size projects and providing training to heads of poor families.

Out of this sum, the department said JD20 million will be spent on improving conditions within the country's 13 camps, while the rest will finance wastewater treatment plants to serve these camps and their adjacent regions.



MINISTER OPENS NEW HOSPITAL WING: Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi, accompanied by Yemeni Minister of Health Abdul Wali Nasher, Sunday open a new section at the University of Jordan Hospital. The hospital's general manager, Mohammad Abu Khalaf, said the hospital aims to be a regional centre (University of Jordan photo)

Editor of weekly newspaper released

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The editor of the satirical weekly "Abed Rabboh" has been released after four days of detention.

Abdul Hadi Raji Majali was arrested from his home on Tuesday by security forces and no reason was given for the arrest.

According to Mr. Majali, his arrest was ordered by the prosecutor general at the State Security Court because of a picture he ran on the front page of "Abed Rabboh."

The picture shows Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali holding a microscope and looking under the belt of a person while calling out to Minister of Interior Nuhir Rashid: "Come on Nuhir, I found an infiltrator and a Kalashnikov."

The newspaper's 47th issue was openly criticising the government's measures during the Ma'an riots in February, which led to one person being killed and over 20 others injured.

Interrogators told Mr. Majali that "the picture defamed the prime minister and my articles were provocative," he said.

The weekly's issue was almost entirely devoted to mocking the government over its insistence last month that it was barring pro-Iraqi rallies because it had solid information that "infiltrators" might use the demonstrations for sabotage.

Mr. Majali said he was treated well while in detention.

The New York-based human rights watchdog, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), last week faxed a letter to the prime minister expressing concern over the detention of Mr. Majali and asking him to use his good offices to ensure his immediate release.

"It is CPJ's position that members of the press should never face arrest or criminal prosecution because of material they publish. We are concerned that the threat of detention and criminal action inhibit the ability of the press to work freely," the letter read.

"Abed Rabboh," the only satirical weekly in Jordan, was the first to shut down after the government passed the 1993 temporary Press and Publications Law last May. The weekly was followed by another 13 publications.

The law, which was criticised both home and abroad as stifling "freedom of expression," raised the minimum capital of the weeklies from JD15,000 to JD300,000. It also imposed new fines for violators amounting to a maximum of JD50,000, up from the original JD6,000, in addition to giving the court the right to suspend publication of any paper found violating the law's spirit.

On January 26, the High Court of Justice annulled the temporary law, which was passed while Parliament was in recess, and declared it unconstitutional, opening the door for all the suspended weeklies to resume publication.

what's going on

- FILM**
- * "Le Samourai" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.
- SALE**
- * "Bake Sale" at the Jordan Meningitis Foundation, Um Utheina, Al Hira Street, behind Aramex on Tuesday, March 10, starting at 10:00 a.m. (Proceeds will go to Meningitis Vaccine Fund and treatment of the needy).
- LECTURES**
- * "Political Pluralism and Reinforcement of National Unity in Jordan" by Lower House of Parliament Deputy Bassam Haddadin at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.
 - * "Western Research Studies on Islamic
- EXHIBITION**
- * Modernisation (Tahdith) (in Arabic) by Dr. Stefan Wild at Al Isra' University at 12:00 noon.
 - * Paintings by Saleh Abu Shindi at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until March 19.
 - * Works by Sana' Kayyali at Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 5681303/4), until March 26. (Proceeds will go to Al Quds Al Sharif Defending Association).
 - * The Spanish Contemporary Graphic Art at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman (Tel. 610858), until March 20.
 - * Private collection of Mamdouth Bisharat entitled "A Vision, An Identity" at Darat Al Fuman, Jabal Weibdeh until April 9 (Tel. 643251). Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists — "The New Collection."

NEWS IN BRIEF

- Health ministry begins polio vaccination campaign next week**
- AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Health and Medical Care, in cooperation with the World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Rotary Club, will start a Kingdom-wide polio vaccination campaign next week. The five-day campaign will cover children through the age of five.
- Assistance fund helps 60 needy families**
- AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Social Development's National Aid Fund in eastern Amman offered assistance to 60 needy families last February. The fund extends cash aid and rehabilitates those who are in dire need of assistance.
- Agricultural department releases February figures**
- AMMAN (Petra) — The Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC) last month exported 27,600 tonnes of vegetables and fruits worth JD8.1 million. Lebanon imported 13,459 tonnes of these products, Kuwait came second with 4,392 tonnes, and the UAE with 4,038 tonnes.
- King, Crown Prince meet with Sharon**
- (Continued from page 1)
- Mr. Sharon, one of three in Israel's "kitchen cabinet," is the first Israeli official to meet with Jordanian leaders following the Jewish state's investigations into the Mossad's assassination attempt on Hamas leader Khaled Misha'al in Amman on Sept. 25.
- Bilateral relations reached their lowest point following the failed attack, after which Jordan cut security cooperation to a minimum.
- Jordan had reportedly requested that the head of Mossad, Danny Yatom, be replaced for the resumption of security cooperation.
- The probe into the Mossad's Amman fiasco, released Feb. 16, fell short of calling for the resignation of Mr. Yatom, and did not rule out another attack on Jordanian soil.
- The findings were blasted by Jordan. Mr. Yatom resigned on Feb. 24, after a series of blunders by the Mossad during his tenure were made public.
- His temporary replacement, Ephraim Halevy, who has close relations with Jordanian leaders and was instrumental in negotiations leading up to the 1994 peace treaty, has been welcomed by many in Amman.
- Other officials, however, see Mr. Halevy's appointment as an internal Israeli affair that has little to do with Jordan's preferences.
- Mr. Sharon's visit is the first of a series scheduled between Jordanian and Israeli officials this week. Minister of Industry and Trade Hani Mulki is expected to hold talks in Amman today with his Israeli counterpart Natan Sharansky, on trade-related issues.
- Crown Prince Hassan is scheduled to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Minister of Defence Yitzhak Mordechai in Tel Aviv on Tuesday, after talks with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in Ramallah today.
- Jordanian officials have said that bilateral relations will return to "normal" if the string of talks produce tangible results.

4 World News

Women demonstrate as Kosovo refugees hide in hills

PRISTINA, Serbia (R) — Hundreds of ethnic Albanian women demonstrated in the capital of Kosovo Sunday against the killing of dozens of alleged separatist guerrillas in the Yugoslav province by Serbian anti-terrorist police.

Officials of the Democratic League of Kosovo, the main ethnic Albanian party, said the area west of Pristina where fighting had been concentrated overnight with only sporadic shooting.

But villagers, who spent a third night sleeping rough in the hills as police continued their sweep, said they had no food or water and feared for their lives.

The demonstrators gathered outside the U.S. Cultural Centre in Pristina where American diplomats were seeking prospects for a compromise between Serbia and ethnic Albanian leaders demanding independence for Kosovo.

Reporters who reached the village of Prekaz Saturday saw police in action for a third straight day against what the Serbian authorities say is a "terrorist nest" of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

Terrified people who fled Prekaz and other villages in the Drenica region when police pounced Thursday were hiding out in the hills and woods.

"They came at us from three sides at dawn. We got the word to get out and we didn't have time even to get dressed properly," one woman said.

"We have no food or water, we are desperate. We have never had any guns and now the Serbs have come to kill us," a leader of the local branch of the leading Albanian LDK party told reporters Saturday.

A pro-government daily in Belgrade, the Serbian and Yugoslav capital, said "dozens" of Albanian guerrillas had been killed in the operation, which began last weekend. It had earlier put the death toll at 70.

Police said the dead included KLA leader Adem Jashari, who they said had been trained across the border in Albania, and his brother and another senior guerrilla.

The KLA has emerged as a military threat in the past two years in response to growing impatience with the lack of progress by political leaders demanding independence for Kosovo.

The province, where Albanians outnumber Serbs

nine to one, had its autonomous status stripped in 1989 when then-Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic was amassing power on a wave of Serbian nationalism, and has since been ruled by Belgrade with an iron fist.

International pressure mounted at the weekend for Mr. Milosevic, now president of the Yugoslav Federation, to open a dialogue with the Albanians, but he seemed determined to ignore appeals for restraint.

Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz Saturday urged Balkan countries to help forge such a dialogue, and sent his Foreign Minister Ismail Cem to Belgrade.

Bulgarian Prime Minister Ivan Kostov, host to Mr. Yilmaz during a visit by the Turkish leader to Sofia Saturday, told a joint news conference: "We fear very much a spillover of the conflict and the possibility of new sanctions against Yugoslavia."

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook was due to chair a ministerial meeting of France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the United States Monday to discuss Kosovo.

Mr. Cook said Saturday he was determined that the

meeting should give a clear message to Mr. Milosevic, who rejected an earlier warning when he met Mr. Cook in Belgrade Thursday.

But he said it would be premature to state whether there would be a proposal for new sanctions in addition to those already intended to make Belgrade support peace in the region.

Western countries, fearing a new Balkan conflagration, have made clear they want a diplomatic solution to the conflict in which the Albanians would drop independence claims in exchange for a restoration of autonomy.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Saturday that Washington would not tolerate violence in Kosovo, but did not repeat earlier warnings of military intervention, saying only that "nothing was ruled out."

Many locals say the latest government crackdown can only help the separatist cause.

"These children will grow up and it's up to them to avenge their fathers and brothers," one refugee from the fighting told reporters Saturday. "So who is to say who is KLA and who is not? It is the bitterness that matters."



Albanian soldiers run in a training session at a military unit at the northern town of Kukes, 210 km from Tirana, bordering the Yugoslav volatile province of Kosovo. Albania has put on high alert its army in northern regions bordering Yugoslavia due to the tense situation in Kosovo (Reuters photo)

India's Hindu nationalists 'days away from power'

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's Hindu nationalists Sunday said they were just days away from forming a government as vote counting in the world's largest democracy neared its end.

The nationalists predicted their leader Atal Behari Vajpayee would be invited to become premier by the end of the week. They claimed he would bring stability after the collapse of four governments in two years.

Party spokesman K.R. Malkani told AFP: "We are confident that this will be the first real BJP government — this is the real thing."

"We expect the final results of the elections by March 11 or 12. India's president is likely to call us around March 13, with the swearing-in the next day," Mr. Vajpayee was Saturday confirmed as the parliamentary leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party), whose alliance emerged as the largest group following the deadlocked election.

India's Election Commission said counting for the final result of the February-March parliamentary election was nearing its end.

An official said votes polled last month for two seats in the northern state of

Kashmir, including the state summer capital Srinagar, had begun. The results were due later Sunday.

Counting for two other Kashmir constituencies which voted Saturday, will begin Monday. The final two Kashmir seats go to the ballot later this month and in June.

The Hindu BJP bloc claimed around 250 out of 545 seats, with 10 seats in remote regions yet to be decided. The nationalists are confident of winning the backing of enough minor parties and independents to reach a majority.

Its main opponents, the Congress and its allies (166 seats) and the outgoing United Front multi-party coalition (95), have all but given up hope of reforming an anti-nationalist alliance.

The two groups had teamed up after 1996 polls to thwart the BJP but constant wrangling ended their uneasy co-habitation after 18 months.

Mr. Vajpayee, rejecting claims the BJP planned to introduce a Hindu theocracy, told a leadership meeting Saturday that "secularism is in our blood."

"Our agenda is not one of hate. Our agenda is the nation's agenda," he said.

Analysts, however, questioned whether the BJP, which claimed 178 seats on its own for its best-ever total,

can live up to its pledge of providing political stability.

Leading political analyst Rajni Kothari, from the Independent Centre for the Studies of Developing Societies, said a nationalist coalition would be more unstable and "last just a few months."

He said the BJP would have to "dump the entire right-wing Hindu agenda to keep together."

BJP spokesman Malkani, however, argued: "It's not a major problem. Our main allies number half a dozen and they are old allies. They know us and we know them."

The main concerns over the BJP surround its agenda of "swadeshi" or "economic nationalism" and its attitude towards Muslims, who make up 125 million of India's 960 million population.

Most foreign investors, however, believe the party will limit its pledge of protecting Indian industry from overseas competition and will continue free-market reforms.

India's elections, estimated to have cost more than \$1 billion, took place over three days in February. Around 330 million of India's 605 million voters, took part.

The final results of the polls are due out later this week.

Hong Kong fog disrupts weekend air traffic

HONG KONG (AFP) — Heavy fog threw Hong Kong air traffic into chaos, with tens of thousands of passengers hit by weekend delays and cancellations, officials said Sunday.

Civil Aviation Department spokesman Vincent Kan said that Sunday the authorities had cancelled 38 flights, delayed 145 and diverted 22 because of a second day of thick fog.

Kai Tak International Airport was forced late Saturday to relax its curfew, allowing flights to take off and land after 1:00 a.m. (1700 GMT) to clear the fog.

Anton Nel, a South African jet-ski trader, changed his plans to catch a connecting flight to Johannesburg when a delayed Singapore Airlines flight prevented him from making a business meeting in Singapore.

"I'll have to phone my partners from home," he said.

metres, airport authorities cancelled 64 flights, diverted 57 and delayed 240.

Hong Kong's famous high-rise cityscape did a vanishing act as mists caused by 95 per cent humidity swallowed buildings.

The airport disruption affected more than 10,000 passengers Saturday and virtually the same number Sunday, a Civil Aviation Department spokesman said. Thousands were stranded at the airport overnight.

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said. "It's a shame to come all this way and not even see them," he added.

One man taking eight family members for trip to Bangkok saw the visit cut from three days to two. "That's not much of a trip," he said.

With more than 7,000 passengers crowding Kai Tak's transit area by late Saturday afternoon, Cathay Pacific check-in supervisor Teresa Fong Oi-Kam urged passengers not to go through immigration.

"Inside it's chaotic," Mr. Fong said. "It's very crowded. We're telling people not to go in early."

Cathay Pacific was forced Saturday to delay and merge 12 outgoing flights, and redirect 18 incoming flights to Shenzhen, in China, Taipei, Macau and Manila. Incoming flights resumed landing at around 10:00 p.m.

A humid southerly airstream gave rise to the heavy fog, a Hong Kong Observatory spokesman said.

Australian PM rejects moves to water down gun laws

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australian Prime Minister John Howard Sunday rejected moves to water down tough gun laws introduced two years ago after a lone gunman massacred 35 people in the island state of Tasmania.

"My government remains absolutely committed to the full maintenance throughout Australia, without qualification, of the agreement concluded between the governments of Australia in 1996, regarding the use of firearms," he told an International Women's Day breakfast.

Union, church and community leaders gathered on the steps of parliament house in Melbourne Sunday to oppose attempts in Victoria state to ease the requirements for gun ownership.

The protest was led by Walter Miksa, whose wife and two little daughters were gunned down at the massacre in Port Arthur, and who has called on Victoria's new home state, to stand by the national agreement.

Victoria has legislation before its state parliament allowing the chief commissioner of police to reduce the 28-day waiting period for people already owning a gun, who want to buy another one.

The amendments also allow people to carry and use guns within town boundaries and permit semi-automatic shotguns to be used by members of the Field and Game Association.

Mr. Howard reiterated his personal commitment to the maintenance, in full, of every part of the agreement which was made in 1996.

"And I am sure that is the view of the overwhelming majority of the Australian community," he said.

A spokesman for the Coalition for Gun Control, Progress, Baptist Minister Tim Godwin, said he was disappointed with federal Justice Minister Amanda Vanstone, who had left the way open for changes to the gun laws.

"She huffed and puffed and said 'This is outrageous' and then she seems to have caved in," he said.

Ms. Vanstone has said that while she would never consider weakening the national code, she was open to suggestions for improvements.

However, any "fine-tuning" would have to be made with agreement from all states, she said.

Aborigines warn land row could derail treaty

CANBERRA (R) — An Australian aboriginal leader Sunday warned that a row over aboriginal land rights could derail the push for a treaty aimed at achieving harmony between native Australians and whites.

Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation chief Evelyn Scott said an early election to resolve the land rights dispute could be a disaster for the country.

"Any resolution which is seen by indigenous people as taking away important rights which they have won in the courts will do great damage to the cause of reconciliation," said Ms. Scott, a part aborigine, part south sea islander from Queensland state.

"And if there is an early election... on this issue, then this council will publicly call for all political leaders to guarantee that they and their parties will avoid even a hint of race-based campaigning and that they will publicly condemn in clear terms such campaigning by anyone else."

Prime Minister John Howard is threatening an early election — possibly as soon as July — to end the land rights row.

Ms. Scott told reporters that

a fair solution to the land row was vital to achieving reconciliation between aborigines and non-aboriginal Australians.

The council, which includes aboriginal and non-aboriginal members, is charged with achieving reconciliation and hopes to have a draft treaty by the Sydney Olympic games in 2000.

Mr. Howard's early election threat has sparked fears of a race-based election in a nation still recovering from a divisive race row set off by outspoken politician Pauline Hanson in 1996.

He wants to resolve the land rights row by guaranteeing aborigines some access to government pastures leased to farmers, but restricting aborigines' powers to claim such rights.

Aborigines say his planned law is racist and strips them of land rights won through the courts. Farmers, too, are critical. They say Mr. Howard's plan erodes their ability to manage the land by giving aborigines too much say.

The proposed law has run into problems in parliament's upper house, the senate, where the Labour opposition, minor parties and independents hold

the majority of seats.

If the senate rejects the legislation again, Mr. Howard can dissolve both houses of parliament and call an early election.

The senate also looks set to soon give Mr. Howard more early election triggers by again rejecting several other bills dealing with a range of separate issues.

Mr. Howard has privately spoken of an election between July and October. His government won power in March 1996 and under Australia's loose electoral laws he can call an ordinary election any time between September 1998, and mid-May 1999.

Ms. Scott said the council wanted a draft treaty drawn up by the Sydney Olympics. The council would hold a conference in May 2000 to discuss the draft. The meeting would agree on a treaty to be promptly put to all Australians for a vote.

Australia's 360,000 aborigines and native Torres Strait islanders are some of the most disadvantaged of the country's 18.3 million people, with shorter life expectancy and higher rates of disease, imprisonment and unemployment.



Indonesian President Suharto (right) shakes hand with military delegation chief Lieutenant General Yunus Yosfiah at his Candarm residence in Jakarta (AFP photo)

Suharto formally agrees to be nominated to office again

JAKARTA (AFP) — President Suharto Sunday agreed to be nominated for a seventh five-year term in the midst of the country's worst crisis since the 76-year-old leader came to power.

His agreement to remain at the helm came as Indonesia faced spiralling inflation, growing unemployment and other serious economic problems caused by the rapid decline of the rupiah currency.

Giving the nod to leaders of the five factions in the policy-making People's Consultative Assembly, who met separately with him at his residence, Mr. Suharto expressed reservations about the IMF bailout for Indonesia.

The head of the ruling Golkar party quoted Mr. Suharto as saying the \$43 billion International Monetary Fund global aid package was not suitable for the country because it was not in

line with the constitution.

"With the support of all our socio-political strength and will of the nation, God willing, we will solve the problems," Ginjar Kartasasmita said after meeting with the president.

Friday, the IMF said it was delaying a second tranche of \$3 billion for Indonesia because Jakarta had not complied with the fund's reform measures.

Three state-sanctioned political parties, the armed forces and the regional representatives making up the consultative assembly, the nation's highest legislative body, all endorsed the reappointment of Mr. Suharto.

"The president humbly asked if this was the people's aspiration and said he was prepared to serve the country and people," the Antara news agency quoted military delegation chief Lieutenant General Yunus Yosfiah as saying after meeting the president.

The military led the consultations by the factions which, in alphabetical order, asked Mr. Suharto to accept their nominations.

The president struck a similar tone with faction leaders of the Indonesian Democratic Party, the United Development Party and regional representatives.

He said that if it was the wish of the people that someone his age lead the country, he would do so with a "fighting spirit."

Mr. Suharto took power in 1966 in the wake of a failed coup attempt blamed on the now-banned Indonesia Communist Party and has run unopposed in every election held since 1968.

The five factions of the 1,000-member assembly started deliberations here March 1 and will conclude the five-yearly assembly Wednesday. The president will be officially returned to office Tuesday and name his deputy the following day.

Australia republic plan put on political backburner

CANBERRA (R) — Australia's conservative government will ignore the push for Australia to become a republic until national vote due in 1999, a key minister said Sunday.

Special Minister of State Nick Minchin also said the Labour opposition and the republican movement faced a tough battle to win the vote to sever 210-year-old ties with Britain, the country's former colonial master.

"(This) is a considerable challenge to the Labour Party and the republican movement, but it's over to them," he told The Ten television network.

Monarchist Prime Minister John Howard has charged Mr. Minchin with responsibility for republican issues.

Mr. Minchin, one of Mr. Howard's few key ministers who is also a monarchist, said it would be difficult for the republicans to win the high public support needed to change the constitution.

Constitutional change requires support from the majority of voters across Australia's six states and two territories, as well as a majority in at least four of the states.

Only eight of 42 attempts to change the Australian constitution have succeeded since British colonies formed the nation in 1901.

Mr. Howard promised a vote in 1999 after a special convention in February endorsed a republic with an Australian president replacing Britain's Queen Elizabeth as head of state.

"The government's very pleased with the outcome of the convention but the issue now, as far as the government is concerned, is off the agenda until after the next election," Mr. Minchin said, adding the prime minister did not expect the republicans to be an election issue.

Mr. Howard has threatened an election as soon as July over an aboriginal land rights row, but can wait until mid-1999.

Former Labour Prime Minister Paul Keating campaigned strongly for a republic after he became leader in 1991, but the issue faded after the liberal-national coalition won office in 1996.

Mr. Howard agreed to hold the special convention only after strong political and community pressure. Polls show strong support for a republic.

Australia is an independent constitutional monarchy, but its constitution was passed as an act of the British parliament. A vote for change in 1999 would mean Australia could become a republic by January 1, 2001, the centenary of nationhood.

Criticism of Mr. Suharto's leadership during the economic crisis has been voiced on a daily basis in the week leading up to the selection day, with student protests mounting on campuses across the country.

Students held protests for straight days, to demand Asia's longest serving leader take a step aside following what was branded a poor handling of the crisis sparked by the steep fall in the rupiah against the dollar in July.

Megawati Sukarnoputri, former head of the Indonesian Democratic Party, and Amie Rais, leader of the country's second largest Muslim organisation, nominated themselves as alternative candidates for the presidency.

The Indonesian election system however does not allow candidates not nominated by the five assembly factions to run for office.

World pressure sought for women's rights in Afghanistan

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AFP) — Afghan groups waging a campaign for women's rights have urged aid-giving countries to increase pressure and combat what they call the worst kind of discrimination against women in Afghanistan.

The call by the heads of women's groups based in the Pakistani city of Peshawar, close to the Afghan border, came in a message on the eve of International Women's Day being observed Sunday.

"Discrimination against women has become a common problem in the present day world. But the way the Afghan women are experiencing it is unparalleled and unprecedented," said Jameela Habib, a leader of the Revolutionary Association for the Women of Afghanistan.

Under the Taliban Islamic militia's regime, women in Afghanistan are being denied education, jobs and any role in politics, she told reporters Saturday. "They are not even allowed free movement outside their homes."

Successive Afghan governments have deprived the women of their fundamental human rights, she said, adding: "Withdrawal of foreign assistance to various warring groups is the only solution to the Afghan problem."

The Taliban Islamic militia ousted the government of former president Burhanuddin Rabbani 18 months ago and now hold two-thirds of the country which has been ravaged by 18 years of turmoil.

including the 1979-89 jihad against the "pro-Moscow communist regime."

The Taliban, emerging from religious schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan, intervened amid widespread bloodshed.

Vowing to end lawlessness and anarchy, they imposed extreme Islamic punishments. Chopping off hands for theft, stoning for adultery and hanging men for treachery, they say security is much improved in the area under their control.

Farana Ishaq Gilani, President of Afghan Women Council, said Islam allows Muslim women to get education and engage in honourable jobs for their survival.

"Millions of Afghan women who have lost their husbands, fathers or sons in the 18-year war, are facing serious social and economic problems, she said.

"The Afghan women are not demanding any extra benefits, but only 'the rights enshrined in the sacred religion of Islam,'" Ms. Gilani said.

Calling on Afghan women to initiate a joint struggle for their rights, she also urged the United Nations and Western countries to urgently use their influence in resolving the Afghan conflict.

Taliban Deputy Information Minister Abdul Rahman Hotaki Saturday said the restrictions would stay despite international pressure.

"This is the country that has been devastated and women's rights as determined by Shariat (Islamic law) will be restored as conditions allow," he told AFP in Kabul.

"When the war is over, there will be no restrictions on facilities open to women, but at the moment those facilities do not exist," he observed.

Mr. Hotaki slammed campaigners who have dedicated the international women's day to Afghan women living under Taliban rule.

"Where were the so-called campaigners when the Russians were making our women widows? Where were they when the opposition were in Kabul and dishonouring the women," he asked.



Chinese police wrestle with a couple while others try to prevent photos of the scuffle from being taken (Reuters photo)

Greens take hardline positions but still seek to govern with left

MAGDEBURG, Germany (AFP) — Did the Greens commit political suicide by calling this weekend for draconian gas taxes and no German peacekeeping in Bosnia, or did they simply quashed the idealistic roots that have made them Germany's third party?

It was too soon to tell as the Greens environmentalists remain the best mathematical hope for the main opposition party, the Social Democrats (SPD), to win a majority for the left in national elections Sept. 27.

Polls suggest that the SPD alone cannot win a majority to unseat conservative Chancellor Helmut Kohl's 16-year-old administration. The SPD and Greens would together, however, have enough seats to govern.

The problem is that the Greens confounded predictions at a party congress in the eastern city of Magdeburg that they would move towards the mainstream in a bid to join a future leftist government.

The Greens rejected the idea of German participation in the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Bosnia, and called for tripling the price of gasoline through taxes to fight pollution and offset social benefit costs on salaries.

This could upset the SPD-Greens equation and give a gleam of light to Mr. Kohl, who is bat-

ling with an image problem as unemployment in Germany is at record post-war levels of almost five million.

An opinion poll published by the Forsa Institute showed that 58 per cent of Germans thought the Greens, whose roots lie in the student protests of the 1960s, are not ready for national power, even though they share power in five of Germany's 16 states.

Greens leader Joschka Fischer, who has been mentioned as a possible foreign minister, said after the vote on the U.N. force in Bosnia that the decision "creates unnecessary difficulties for us in foreign policy."

Greens leaders had stressed ahead of this weekend's party congress that the party would not challenge the basic lines and traditions of German foreign policy.

The Greens, whose official name is Alliance90/Greens, to honour their merging with former East German human rights activists, rejected by one vote a compromise that would have backed peacekeeping but not peace-enforcing by German troops.

The vote by 275-274 with 14 abstentions means that Greens deputies who follow the party line would vote against a renewal of German participation in NATO peacekeeping in Bosnia when the U.N. mandate for this is

renewed in July.

Meanwhile, the gas tax hike idea was greeted with near-hows of derision across the political spectrum. Even putative ally Gerhard Schroeder, the SPD's candidate for chancellor, promptly quashed the idea, saying: "Nonsense, you can't do it with us."

He said later in a television interview: "We have no interest in putting the German automobile industry on the defensive."

The decision to hike gasoline taxes would put up the cost of gasoline to five marks a litre (\$10 a gallon) within a decade if implemented. A litre of gasoline currently costs about 1.7 marks (\$1) in Germany, already expensive when compared with the United States.

The party said the measure would create funds to reduce social contributions on salaries by six per cent, and thus make work cheaper and stimulate more jobs in Germany.

But Greens member of parliament Christine Scheel warned Saturday that such a radical measure could be used "by political adversaries to kill us."

The congress also remained radical in calling for NATO to be dissolved and replaced by a European security arrangement, and for the German army to be halved in size.

China police halt parliament protest by jobless

BEIJING (R) — Chinese police detained a couple Sunday as they tried to get into the heavily-guarded Great Hall of the People to protest to parliament over losing their jobs at a state-run firm.

The couple had eluded tight security on all approaches to the Great Hall in central Beijing, where the parliament is holding its annual meeting. The couple had minutes earlier unfurled a protest banner in the adjacent Tiananmen Square, a photographer for a foreign news agency said.

The banner urged parliament to investigate the management of a state-run oil firm in the industrial city of Hebei. The couple told the photographer that they had worked for the oil firm until they lost their jobs earlier this year.

The middle-aged couple

managed to get within 50 metres of the Great Hall before being quickly hustled into a van by 10 police officers and taken away. Police also chased away the photographer.

The couple had folded up their protest banner and tried to take it into parliament, the photographer said.

During the annual, two-week session parliament is expected to endorse a bold plan to overhaul ailing state firms and streamline government industries.

Labour Minister Li Boyong warned last month that as many as 10 million people could lose their jobs this year as a result of reforms to state enterprises.

The brief scuffle was at least the third such mini-protest at Tiananmen Square — a traditional rallying place for protesters

airing grievances against the government — since parliament convened Thursday.

Police Saturday wrestled a woman to the ground and detained her along with a male companion after she tried to present what was believed to be a petition.

Friday, police hustled away a man who tried to unfurl a banner near the square.

Security police have saturated the vast concrete plaza, the site of student-led demonstrations for democracy in 1989 that were crushed by the army with heavy loss of life.

Beijing authorities are determined to head off any protests that could mar a carefully choreographed display of national unity during the congress, which has brought together almost 3,000 delegates

from all over China.

Police have been posted every 50 metres on all major roads approaching Tiananmen Square and Beijing neighbourhoods where Muslim ethnic minority uighurs live have seen their uighur population matched one-to-one by patrolmen.

Some turkic-speaking uighurs have agitated for an independent state in the northwestern region Xinjiang.

Sources said provincial authorities have been ordered to stop petitioners from coming to Beijing during the parliamentary session and to settle any dispute over wages or pensions.

Since last year, dozens of mostly peaceful demonstrations in China's industrial cities have erupted over unpaid wages and pensions.

9 killed in end to Philippine hostage drama

DAVAO, Philippines (AFP) — A police raid Sunday to free five women hostages at a southern Philippine jail ended with eight hostage takers and one of the captives dead, a presidential official said.

The other four hostages were taken to hospital following the raid on Davao Penal Colony at 2:30 p.m. (0630 GMT), according to Davao radio station DXDC.

Jesus Dureza, an aide of President Fidel Ramos, who was sent to negotiate with the prisoners, confirmed the number of fatalities and wounded when reached by phone but said

he had "no further comment."

Officials refused to give details on how badly wounded the four surviving women are.

The hostage drama started at Davao Penal Colony last Thursday after the eight, seven of which are thought to be former Muslim rebels, escaped their cells to take the five civilian workers hostage.

Police General Jose Lalisán told the radio station the assault was ordered after a grenade held by the hostage takers went off.

"They set off a grenade so there was nothing we could do" but order the raid, Gen.

Lalisán said.

"We deemed it right to assault them and rescue the victims," he added, also without giving details on the condition of the women.

An Islamic lawyer representing the insurgent Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) Lanang Ali, who was to negotiate in the hostage drama, said he was "surprised" by the outcome.

The lawyer arrived Sunday around 10:00 am (0200 GMT) to meet the prisoners and negotiate a peaceful end to the four-day standoff.

Officials said that talks

seemed to hinge on the prisoners' demand to be transferred to a prison in the MILF Camp Abubakar.

The prisoners were standing firm on this demand in spite of indications from the government and MILF leaders that it would not be possible, officials said.

Reports coming out of the prison Saturday indicated that the five women suffered no mistreatment by the hostage-takers.

However, they did express concern that the police might launch an assault, prompting the hostage-takers to pull the pin on five grenades they obtained.

Afghan avalanche kills 70 people north of Kabul

KABUL (R) — An avalanche hit a snow-covered village in the Salang area north of the Afghan capital Kabul Saturday, killing at least 70 people, an official said Sunday.

Local rescue workers have so far retrieved 70 bodies from the area at the foot of the Hindu Kush Mountains some 120 km from Kabul, engineer Baryalai, spokesman for an opposition alliance controlling the area said.

"Some people are missing and because of the (difficult) terrain, it is hard to send assistance to the people and find out the exact death toll and the extent of the destruction," he said by telephone.

He said the area was covered by heavy snow.

The opposition-controlled Salang area is blocked from the south by the rival Taliban Islamic militia and from the north by snow that makes sending relief to survivors almost impossible, he said.

There is no major aid agency functioning in the Salang area apart from a local clinic which has no power supply and medical equipment, Mr. Baryalai said.

Early last month a severe earthquake killed more than 4,000 people in the opposition-held northern province of Takhar and late last month, flash floods killed at least 30 people and damaged vast areas of land in the Taliban-ruled southwest.

France's top judge called in over warship scandal

PARIS (AFP) — The head of France's highest court, Roland Dumas, has been ordered to see two investigating judges later this month over a ballooning scandal that has rocked some of the country's most powerful interests. Le Monde newspaper reported Sunday.

According to the paper, Mr. Dumas himself confirmed he had received the order to see the judges in their chambers in the Palais de Justice on March 18.

Although the document simply said he was going to be "notified of the allegations against him," Le Monde said it implied Mr. Dumas — a former foreign minister who is now president of France's Constitutional Court — was to be charged.

The charges, it said, would likely have to do with receiving or helping to obtain fraudulently-acquired company property.

Another newspaper, Le Journal du Dimanche, said Mr. Dumas' lawyers had written to the public prosecutor's office and to President Jacques Chirac

to demand that the case be heard in the special Court of Justice of the republic.

Normal courts, they said, did not have jurisdiction over the affair as it allegedly occurred between 1990-1993 when Mr. Dumas, now 75, was foreign minister.

The allegations stem from the \$2.5-billion sale of six French frigates to Taiwan in 1991.

Initially vetoed by the French government after opposition from China, the deal eventually went ahead.

Investigations since have focused on the role played by the formerly state-run oil conglomerate Elf in allegedly lobbying the French foreign ministry on behalf of the warships' maker, Thomson-CSF.

A close friend of Mr. Dumas', Christine Deviers-Joncour, 51, was reportedly hired by Elf to persuade the then-minister to give the frigate deal the green light.

The French newspaper Liberation, citing court records, said Friday that Ms. Deviers-Joncour

received around 250,000 francs (\$41,670) a month in salary and reimbursed expenses to help her task.

She was also promised a cut of a 150-million-franc (\$25-million) "commission" if the sale went ahead, worth around 59 million francs (\$9.8 million).

Ms. Deviers-Joncour, who bought a sprawling luxury apartment in Paris with money that she reportedly said came from her share of the "commission," is currently behind bars and refuses to speak further.

One of the more concrete pieces of evidence Liberation said has come to light was a credit card transaction by Ms. Deviers-Joncour for a pair of handmade leather shoes worth 11,000 francs (\$1,830) tailored for Mr. Dumas.

If it is believed the shoe purchase influenced his decisions during his time as foreign minister, Mr. Dumas would be forced to resign from his current judicial post.

U.N. rights chief urges firm action on women's rights

GENEVA (AFP) — U.N. human rights chief Mary Robinson Sunday urged firm action to improve the rights of women, who make up the majority of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty and most of the world's refugees.

In a statement issued to mark International Women's Day Sunday, Ms. Robinson said human rights conventions were not enough to guarantee women's rights.

"It is past time to move from fine words to firm

action by international organisations, national and local governments and civil society to ensure that the rights of women everywhere are fully honoured."

The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights called attention to the fact that women made up 70 per cent of the world's poor, millions of girls were still subject to genital mutilation and women in every country were "regular victims of domestic vio-

lence."

Ms. Robinson said the best hopes for realising the human rights of women lay in the efforts of women themselves. "We must avoid viewing women merely as victims of violations and conflict. Women are also the true peacemakers and the peace builders — at the negotiating table and in war-torn communities everywhere."

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Jordan Times

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Decisive action needed

UNLESS CHECKED and contained sooner, the conflict over Kosovo threatens to spread into neighbouring Balkan regions. In many ways, what has happened over the past few days in that province resembles the early stages of the Bosnian crisis, in which ethnic cleansing, mass murder and deportation led to the wider conflict that necessitated outside military intervention. Many capitals, including Washington, London, Moscow, Ankara and Athens, have already expressed concern about the recent developments. Jordan has also added its voice expressing shock at the massacres that were committed lately against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo at the hands of Serbian police and army.

The cause of the crisis is attributed to the fact that about 90 per cent of the population of Kosovo are ethnic Albanians but the province is ruled from Belgrade. The majority of the people of Kosovo yearn for at least autonomy but many seek independence from Serb control. The natural thing is for those people to decide their fate and exercise their right to self-determination in a peaceful manner. The unnatural thing is for Belgrade to deny them that right. The Kosovo Liberation Army struggle for independence prompted Belgrade to respond in a harsher manner.

What is needed now is a return to the negotiating table in order to avoid the kind of bloodshed that the Bosnians had to endure for many years before they attained a semblance of independence and a state of their own. Belgrade should understand that unless it accepts to accord the people of Kosovo their right to self-determination, its policies will ultimately lead to military intervention.

The international community, meanwhile, should get its act together and forge a common stand. If the U.N. Security Council convenes, as Germany recently proposed, an opportunity would be afforded for the council to pronounce itself on the question.

Top priority must, however, be given now to ending the killing of innocent people and their displacement. The U.N. needs to articulate the political and legal framework for a settlement to the problem on the basis of international legitimacy. Above all, the concerned parties should not leave the crisis develop into a quagmire. Now is the time to seize the conflict by the horns before it intensifies any further and spreads to other regions.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Tariq Masarwah accused Israel of game playing by offering to withdraw its forces from Lebanon under certain conditions while in fact it does not want to end its occupation of southern Lebanon territory. When Israel occupied southern Lebanon it did not need any negotiations with the Lebanese, and now if it wants to withdraw, no one stands in its way, but with no negotiations and no conditions as stipulated by U.N. Security Council Resolution 425, said Masarwah. He said Israel wants to open negotiations with Lebanon but does not want to withdraw from Lebanon territory, and it has made it a condition that the resistance be removed from all of Lebanon before negotiations can start. According to Masarwah, Israel wants to isolate Syria by opening negotiations with Lebanon and pit the Lebanese in disputes against the Syrians with the purpose of weakening both parties. The Lebanese are intelligent and are not giving the Israelis a chance to manoeuvre in this respect because they know that the Israelis had opened negotiations with the Palestinians and the Jordanians and did not give them anything and continues to occupy Palestinian lands, according to the writer. He said the Israelis will never allow the Europeans to interfere in the peace process, are now seeking in vain Europe's mediation to pressure Lebanon into accepting Israel's conditional offer but will never succeed.

Al Ra'i's Munir Razzaz said Saddam Hussein lacks any sentiment towards democracy or political pluralism and yet he captures the support of the Arab masses, even those in the Gulf states. This is not because the Arab masses adore President Saddam but simply because they hate America, he noted. Hunger can be of two kinds: Hunger for food and hunger for self respect and dignity, and both kinds of hunger exist in many parts of the Arab World, Razzaz said. He said the Arab masses support the Iraqi leadership because it is perhaps the only leadership in the Arab World that has angered America and continues to provoke Washington and show disregard for its arrogance and openly challenges the U.S. leadership which harbours hatred and malice towards the Arab people at large. The writer said many Arabs are hungry for food and most of them are hungry for national dignity and that is the reason they rally behind President Saddam and oppose Washington's double standard policies.

Economic Review

Dr. Yusuf Mansur

Privatisation debate lives

AGAIN JORDAN temporarily halts the privatisation drive to answer the questions of the unbelievers and address their fears. The debate that ensued last week is indicative of those fears and the need to allay them. However, the privatisation effort must go forward, even while the debate lingers. Why? Because privatisation is an inevitable improvement that must be accomplished. The world is not going to wait until everyone is convinced of the merits of moving out of the way of the private sector.

For starters, the whole world is privatising — particularly the Arab World and the oil-rich Gulf countries. Some countries like Saudi Arabia which is launching a privatisation programme of its telecommunications sector even before it has created a telecommunications law or a regulator (two vital ingredients for the success of the process), are very aggressive. The countries of the MENA region are fully cognizant of the cost of waiting: lower demand for what they have to sell and, as a result, decreased bargaining power as the market wobbles the buyer, not the seller — becomes a buyer's market. The countries of Central and East Europe are privatising whole economies that used to be socialist to the core. More and more, privatisation will offer fewer returns as the market becomes saturated with blue chip companies that are competing not for the highest bidder but for any bidder. Jordan, with the relatively small size of its

offering chances losing significant returns in the waiting game.

In addition, most of the fears that have been raised about privatisation are groundless, and the very reason for privatisation may be missed completely. Privatisation is about opening markets where investment is usually prohibited to investors. In other words, a sector that is usually controlled by the public sector is also investment-starved. This fact applies to all Jordanian sectors where there is a heavy involvement of the government. Why? For two reasons: First, for the monopoly service provider to survive in the long-run the market must be protected; second, investors shy away from markets where their competitor is also the regulator — no level playing field. Therefore, privatisation especially of profitable companies and attractive sectors brings greater investment, which in turn creates more competition, and with competition prices are lowered. It should be underscored that privatisation brings about a market solution to unemployment and lowers poverty as prices of goods and services fall. This is already an empirical fact. The telecommunications market in Jordan has seen investment in cellular telephony, paging and public-telephony which have tended to create not only jobs, but also high-paying jobs at that.

In addition, we must not privatise by selling stocks simply to the Jordanian private sector. We would risk creating many inefficiencies such as the transfer from a public

monopoly to a private monopoly (that is why passing antitrust legislation now could not have been more timely) and thus achieve no economic gains. Also, the domestic stock market may be unable to absorb these stocks which would lead to depressing the price of the stock being offered and depress the market as a whole. (This can be countered by offering the privatised stock in small increments, which arguably lessens the distortion). Additionally, unless the transfer process is competitive and transparent the level of corruption may increase and rent-seeking behaviour — such as revenue generation through "wasta" (the use of influence of relatives and friends to garner contracts and economic rent) may prevail. Most significantly, going with a strategic partner option allows the country to import technology and know-how at a low cost. This is particularly important in the case of telecommunications where the public switched telecommunications network provider needs immediate injections of state-of-the-art technology and needs it now.

Therefore, it is best to continue to discuss privatisation while the work continues at a fast pace. And we must always remember the words of Winston Churchill in November 1942 after the Battle of El-Alamein, "this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

Why China lost and Europe won

By Gwynne Dyer

WHY DOESN'T China dominate the world? It is the oldest major culture still in existence, and it has always been the biggest. Until the 15th century, it usually led the world in technological advances, in literacy, and in its ability to provide a stable, peaceful environment for its people. It was the world's richest and most powerful country.

So why didn't the scientific revolution start in China? Why was it the quarrelsome, Johnny-come-lately Europeans who took the technological lead, settled the Americas and Australasia, conquered the rest of the world, and then had the industrial revolution? Why, even today, does China lag behind its Asian neighbours, Japan and Korea, in both economic and political development?

When I found myself chatting to the chief executive officers of a big Japanese multinational and a big Korean one a couple of years ago, I put the last question to them, and they instantly gave the same response: China's problem is that it is too centralised.

Three times in the past century, they pointed out, some Chinese provinces, mostly on the coast, have begun to climb the well-trodden path to industrialisation and "modernisation." Every time the centre (whether in imperial, nationalist, or communist hands) panicked, because they were becoming too different from the rest. Each time, in the end, Beijing cracked down and stifled the changes in order to "preserve national unity."

As an explanation for China's difficulty in mod-

ernising in the past century, this argument holds a lot of water. Even today, Beijing's communist rulers cite the danger of "luan" (literally, chaos) as a reason to fear and shun democracy in China, and the Chinese obsession with preserving national unity is so strong that it still has a certain resonance. Now along comes someone with a far more sweeping theory about China's failure to modernise, but one that runs along the same lines.

The reason that Europe forged ahead in the past five hundred years while China stagnated, argues Graeme Lang in two recent essays, is basically that China was united and Europe wasn't. Take the Ming emperor's decree of 1433 banning ocean voyages, the most fateful single decision of the past thousand years.

At that time, China was the technological leader, having been first with innovations like gunpowder, printing, and magnetic compasses, all achieved, it should be noted, in the period of political disunity that preceded the Ming hegemony.

Europe had copied these advances, and from both Europe and China the first ships were venturing into the wider world beyond. Both regions had great technological superiority over the rest of the world — and whoever got there first was going to dominate it.

At precisely that point, the Chinese emperor banned ocean voyages. His decree was enforced throughout China, with the result that today all of the Americas, and even Australia and New Zealand, speak European languages, not Chinese. Little European countries

like Portugal and the Netherlands even built empires in Africa and the rest of Asia, while China fell further and further behind.

Graeme Lang's point is that this was not an accident. Had some European monarch made the same decree as the Ming emperor, he simply could not have enforced it, for Europe was divided into dozens of big states and hundreds of smaller ones. Neither individuals nor their ideas could be controlled: if you annoyed the ruler of the state you lived in, you just moved on to the next.

Christopher Columbus, for example, pitched his plans for ocean exploration unsuccessfully to five different rulers before he hit the jackpot with Queen Isabella in Spain. Johannes Kepler, working on ideas about the universe that were bound to upset the defenders of the status quo, just kept moving between the many German mini-states, from Tübingen to Graz to Prague to Linz to Dresden. Nobody could shut him up, and so the work got done.

In China, by contrast, it was easy to shut people up if their ideas didn't fit: there was one, omnipotent emperor and literally nowhere else to go. This, says Lang, is why Europe began to pull ahead of China so rapidly once the basic foundations for scientific enquiry and technological advance had been laid. But he also makes another, even more profound observation.

The basic difference between Europe and China, Lang argues, was neither the accidents of politics, nor even the underlying culture. After all, as he observes, "even if culture was a factor,

we would be left with the problem of explaining why the cultures of these two regions were so different." The real difference, he says, was simply geography. China was easy to unite, whereas it was impossible to unite Europe.

Look at a map, and it's obvious why. China and Europe are about the same size, and both then and now they have about the same number of people. But China is a simple land-mass with a smooth coastline, long navigable rivers, no big mountain ranges, and no large offshore islands (neither Taiwan nor Hainan are even as big as Ireland). Europe, on the other hand, has a deeply indented coastline, big offshore islands, and serious mountain ranges.

Nobody ever managed to unite Europe, though many tried: the Caesars, Charlemagne, Napoleon, and most recently Hitler. China, on the other hand, was first united in 221 BC, and despite occasional collapses has stayed united for over 90 per cent of the time since then. China's had luck. Europe's fortune, says Lang: it was precisely the disunity of Europe that made it impossible for rulers wedded to the status quo to smother innovation.

All water under the bridge, but at last things may be changing: most of Europe is moving towards unity under the European Union. It will be a long and rocky road, but once economic union and the single currency kick in next January 1st, the trend will be largely irreversible.

Now if only China can contrive to be disunited...

Our children deserve better

To the editor:

REGRETTABLY JORDAN has witnessed a dangerous phenomenon in the high numbers of crimes committed against our beloved children. What is indeed excruciating in these abhorrent crimes is not only their heinousness, but also the absurd, even psychotic, motives behind them.

Despite the related symposiums, workshops, seminars and resultant calls from all levels to curb, better yet, halt, the growing rates of child abuse in the country, the problem still goes unresolved. Is it not for our offspring that we make great sacrifices, endure and suffer all life's hardships?

LETTERS

I was incredibly shocked to learn that a mother dares to so severely hurt her son, to mutilate his body because she is on bad terms with her husband and he (the child) is the father's favourite. Are we degenerating to that extent of inhumanity? This is utter absurdity.

It hodes ill for the future if we have made our sons the scapegoats of our evil thoughts against others.

As far as I remember, in the last year we heard about a father, who does not deserve to be called a father that killed his two small children by poisoning them with pills because he doubted that they were truly his children and

because they were more attached to their mother than to him. I stood motionless when my own son rushed up to me asking spontaneously: "Dad are you going to pour kerosene on my body like that father did to his son the other day?"

What are the answers we should give, as parents, to our kids, to dispel their fears that they might be killed one day?

This tragedy should be stopped with urgent, decisive solutions applied soon. It goes without saying that we hold great responsibilities towards our children and if we are not entitled to assume the duties of this priority, it is better for us at least to stop bragging that we have made a better future for the generations to come.

Mazen Al Tamimi
Amman

Human Rights File

Road perils violate the right to life

By Waleed M. Sadi

RECENTLY THE Traffic Department came up with a new way to combat the rising rate of road accidents in the country. This new initiative was revealed a few weeks ago by the Director of the Traffic Department against the backdrop of increasing numbers of fatalities and injuries from accidents in our streets and highways. The appalling figures show that 39,000 accidents occurred in 1997 — that's an average of more than 100 per day. Even more tragic is that 577 people lost their lives on our roads and more than 16,000 sustained injuries.

The right to life is a person's most precious right. What better way to preserve life than to protect people from natural and man-made disasters including of course dangerous driving conditions, which take heavy toll on life everywhere in the world.

The new formula for curbing the rising carnage on our streets is the so-called "points system," which assigns a certain number of points for every traffic violation committed by a driver depending on its severity. As the points add up, driver's face fines, penalties and licence suspensions and could even have their licences revoked. There is no problem with trying this new method to reverse the trend of traffic accidents, especially when such systems have proven successful elsewhere in the world. Yet one's only concern in this vein is that the old traditional ways of dealing with traffic issues have failed not because they are lacking but because they were not applied properly and rationally.

There is no sense in trying new ideas to stem road accidents if these methods are going only to be applied in the same manner as their predecessors. There is always room for innovation but not for the sake of innovation. When a system proves its shortcomings after having been religiously applied then we may experiment with a new approach.

It seems that the priorities of our traffic officials are lopsided. Our authorities appear to target speeding and illegal parking at the expense of other serious driving violations such as not stopping at stop signs, failing to use turn signals when turning or changing lanes, and cutting off drivers who have the right of way at intersections. We have yet to see one driver stopped or apprehended for ignoring a stop sign, for zig-zagging through lanes, or for turning left from the furthestmost right lane (or vice-versa). Of course how can drivers be expected to "respect lanes" when there are so few clearly delineated lanes. Wasfi Tell Street (formerly Gardens) in Amman is literally a "hit or miss" experience. Road engineers need to wake up to the fact that Jordan vehicle population growth rate requires a more organised system of lane delineation and certainly more traffic lights. We have many streets in Amman for example wide enough to cope with three or four lane traffic, but the manner in which they are divided into lanes which start, stop and may start up again, and the way driver's take to those roads are recipes for disaster, as we have too often experienced.

The Traffic Department appears to be the least concerned about pedestrian street crossings, especially for children and the elderly. The department must be challenged to study and properly mark safe pedestrian crossing zones. Along with that, drivers must be held responsible for violating pedestrian crossing zone rules.

And while we are speaking of children's rights to safe roads and safe driving, we have a right to ask why there are no enforced rules about wearing seat belts for infants and children passengers. The recklessness of driving a "pick-up" vehicle loaded with children and adults give cause to wonder about the priorities of the Traffic Department.

The public would also like to be shown where there are adequate sidewalks for pedestrians to use in the country. What we see on sidewalks are parked cars, trees, shrubs, stones and other obstacles that render their use impossible. Why does the Municipality of Amman show such callous concern for the existence and upkeep of sidewalks? Surely a simple system of fines could alleviate the dismal conditions of our sidewalks. As long as we do not have real sidewalks pedestrians have no choice but to share streets with vehicles, something which is quite common in Jordan.

Then there is the problem of black smoke emissions from vehicles. We are told that no car is licensed unless it is proven that it does not billow black smoke. If this is the case, why is it that our streets and highways are still littered with cars spewing black smoke from their exhaust pipes? Why is not a single vehicle ever stopped for such violations? Come to think of it, why is there no national policy to phase out leaded gasoline and introduce unleaded fuel instead like most countries have already done including many states in our region out of concern for the health of their peoples and the environment. The authorities plead that protecting the health of the people is a hit expensive. So in the eyes of our government our health is dispensable. When countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Israel and Egypt, to name only some of our immediate neighbours, decide that no price is too high to protect its citizens from the hazards of leaded fuel, we have a right to ask why our government does not share this sober view. Why continue to allow the import of new cars stripped of all safety features including catalytic converters for the use of unleaded gasoline? Is it still necessary go on and on citing examples of gross negligence on the part of the traffic personnel?

While all of us behind the wheel or walking the streets would still like very much to thank our authorities for wanting to explore the "points system" consecrated to a limited variety of traffic violations, we invite them to first apply the old rules in a more effective and balanced manner and expand their horizon on road safety. The people would like to invite the "experimenters" to show greater sensitivity to life on our streets by getting more serious in the pursuit of that goal.

Four decades after excavations started Tell Deir Alla still has much to say about the ancient Jordan Valley

This is the first of two articles on the current excavations at Tell Deir Alla and Tell el-Hammeh, in the central Jordan Valley. Today's article looks at Tell Deir Alla, and next week's article will report on the discoveries at Tell el-Hammeh, including the exciting find of an iron smelting industry.

By Rami G. Khouri
Special to the Jordan Times

NEARLY FOUR decades after it was first excavated, one of Jordan's largest and most important archaeological mounds, Tell Deir Alla in the central Jordan Valley, is once again providing scholars with exciting new insights into society and technology in the Jordan Valley thousands of years ago. First excavated starting in 1960 by teams headed respectively by Dr. Henk Franken of Leiden University (the Netherlands) and Dr. Moawiyah Ibrahim of Yarmouk University, the excavations were resumed in 1994 and 1996 by a Dutch-Jordanian team headed by Dr. Gerrit van der Kooij and Dr. Zeidan Kafafi, of the same universities.

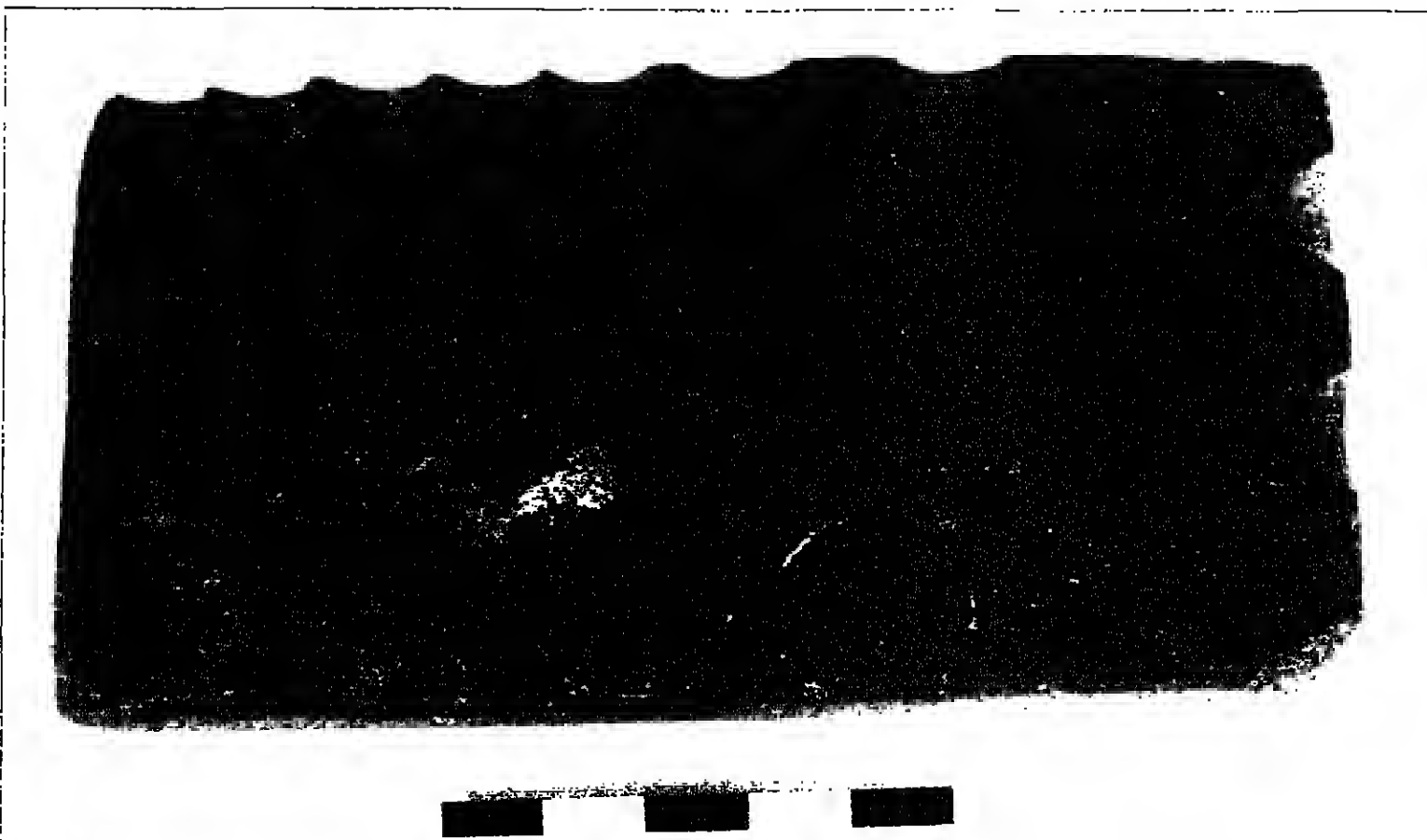
The latest digs confirm that the massive tell still hides many ancient mysteries, and has plenty of information to deliver about human culture and technology in the Bronze and Iron Ages. With its permanent exhibition of excavated artifacts inside the archaeological research station adjacent to the huge tell, Deir Alla may also emerge as a modern focal point for visitors keen to share the excitement of the discovery of the past.

Tell Deir Alla (the mound of the high monastery) towers above the main road of the central Jordan Valley at the town of Deir Alla (west of the road and immediately behind the gas station that dominates that stretch of the road). The excavations since 1960 have revealed that a major market and cultic centre flourished here during the Middle Bronze, Late Bronze and Iron Ages (circa 1600-400 B.C.). The site had many uses throughout history, including a trading centre, temple and cultic centre, farming village, seasonal migration site, grain storage area, and metal-working centre.

The 1994-96 seasons aimed to uncover more of those Bronze and Iron Age towns, and also to explore the wider regional context by surveying the environs of the tell and doing some test digs at the site of Tell el-Hammeh, near the Zarqa River. Most of the ancient buildings rarely used stone but were made of mudbricks that eventually collapsed and usually turned into rubble; therefore the excavations are largely based on analysis of soil layers and their associated natural sediments, human cultural materials, and plant and animal remains.

The site covers an area of some 200 x 200 metres and rises 30 metres above the valley floor. The summit of the tell is about 200 metres below sea level. Many scholars associate Tell Deir Alla with biblical Succoth, though others suggest Succoth is better associated with nearby Tell Akhsas.

The last two seasons have resulted in three major findings at Tell Deir Alla itself: the identification of a distinct new cultural phase in the early 7th Century B.C., the discovery of massive, brick-lined pits of unknown origin



A Late Bronze Age mould for making jewelry, excavated at Tell Deir Alla (Photos courtesy of Leiden University and Yarmouk University).

and use, and the discovery of new settlement areas from the Late Bronze Age with associated evidence of a possible bronze-making industry.

The latest historical levels near the surface of the tell produced some Mamluke and Early Ottoman remains, fragmentary Hellenistic remains, and more substantial architectural evidence from the Persian period such as courtyard layers, some structures made of unusual square bricks, and small pits that seem to have held fodder.

The latest building phase from the late Iron Age dated from the 7th Century B.C., and was represented by large walls and buildings that were destroyed by fire. Most structures were made of mudbricks placed on stone foundations. This phase of the settlement — called phase 7 by the archaeologists — has caused some excitement among scholars because it is being identified as a distinct, perhaps a new, culture that shows strong Assyrian influence from the north. It shows traditional local elements alongside imported customs, such as iron daggers, the first re-use of the pottery wheel in this area in the Iron Age, and the first appearance of sand core glass bottles.

Also conspicuous, Dr. van der Kooij said in a recent interview, was the appearance at that time of ancient pig bones. Equally important was the discovery of a large supply of carbonized wheat and barley in some rooms, in wooden boxes and other containers that also showed remains of some chaff, carbonized cloth, a bronze ring, and two carbonized wooden spindles. Cultural artifacts recovered

from this settlement include a large basalt grinding bowl on three feet, numerous loomweights, and seven bread ovens.

"It's not clear if we have signs of a whole new people who appear on the scene or simply of some new influences entering into the settlement and the population that had existed there for many years," he explained.

From around the same late Iron Age period in the 8th Century B.C. the excavators uncovered another unique structure in 1996 — a nearly 14-metre-diameter, 5-metre-deep pit whose walls were made of finely made mudbricks placed in a sloping position. A similar but smaller pit had been excavated in 1994, but dating from the late 7th Century B.C. The use of these pits is not clear yet, and there are no known parallels from the region. There is no evidence of water-laid silt or a storage function.

Inside, the large pit was an accumulation of natural material that had been blown into the pit in antiquity during a period estimated at between 30 and 50 years, when the site had been abandoned for some reason. As these layers of plant-rich materials are isolated and studied, they will allow the archaeologists to recreate the year-by-year weather patterns of the central Jordan Valley about 2700 years ago. The evidence from the 9th and 10th Centuries B.C. later Iron Age periods indicates the importance of animal herding in the economy of the settlement. This is complemented by the remains of weaving works, including tiny remains of cloth with threads made of hemp

fibers. The settlement was destroyed several times by earthquakes and fires during the 8th Century B.C.

The early Iron Age levels (c. 1100-900 B.C.) produced more evidence of the settlement that Franken had previously exposed, including wall stumps, connected courtyards and streets, and fired clay animal figurines.

The excavation of a test square at the north-west foot of the tell confirmed the sudden, frightening end of the Late Bronze Age town around 1180 B.C. — the burned remains of a person that were found trapped under collapsed roof debris.

The latest excavations indicate that the Late Bronze Age town was at least 200 x 150 metres in size, but the exact relationship of the Late Bronze and the earlier Middle Bronze towns remains to be worked out after future excavations.

The excavations have resumed this year.

Late Bronze Age town

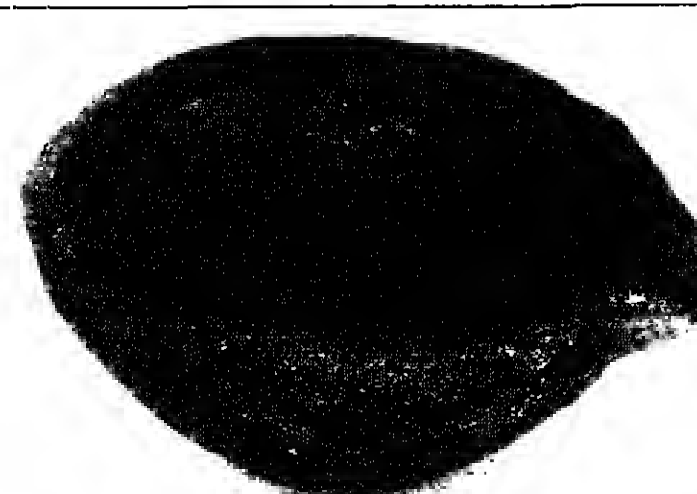
The other major period represented at Tell Deir Alla was the Late Bronze Age, which had been identified previously only on the north slope of the tell, including an important temple area. The latest excavations along the north-west and south-west portions of the site revealed important new dimensions of the period around 1200 B.C. — domestic and commercial areas, strong Egyptian cultural influences (such as a cartouche of a pharaoh on the lid of a large storage jar), a partly unearthed temple, clay tablets with an unknown script, and evidence of a bronze-making industry. The bronze-making materials include an unused crucible and fragments of used ones, and pieces of unworked bronze: these all came from an area outside the town wall, to the south-west, though no evidence of furnaces or smelters has been found.

Many building walls, made of both fired and unfired mudbricks and often double-faced up to 1.5 metres thickness, remained standing nearly one metre high. Among the cultural objects recovered were pottery remains, a tiny clay figurine head, a spindle, sickle flints, a basalt pestle, a mould-made pottery figurine of a nude female missing her head and feet, half of a double mould for making jewelry, incomplete clay tablets, and a bulla (seal) with lion/sphinx and papyrus impressions on the back.

The excavation of a test square at the north-west foot of the tell confirmed the sudden, frightening end of the Late Bronze Age town around 1180 B.C. — the burned remains of a person that were found trapped under collapsed roof debris.

The latest excavations indicate that the Late Bronze Age town was at least 200 x 150 metres in size, but the exact relationship of the Late Bronze and the earlier Middle Bronze towns remains to be worked out after future excavations.

The excavations have resumed this year.



An unused crucible from the 13th Century B.C. bronze-making industry recently discovered at Tell Deir Alla.

Netanyahu whips up new peace plan for Europeans — reports

(Continued from page 1)

According to reports in all main Israeli newspapers, Mr. Netanyahu's plan begins with quick completion of negotiations with the Palestinians on the opening of a Palestinian airport and joint Israeli-Palestinian industrial zone in the Gaza Strip.

Mr. Netanyahu was quoted as saying the two sides were "only a centimetre away" from agreement on both projects and that the Palestinians were holding up the talks.

The second step would involve Israel carrying out a single troop pullback from an unspecified part of the West Bank in tandem with Palestinian compliance with signed agreements, notably concerning action against armed militants.

Agreement on these issues would be hammered out at an EU-hosted summit between Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat, according to the Netanyahu scenario, the reports said.

Thirdly, Mr. Netanyahu would agree to step up EU-brokered multilateral Arab-Israeli talks on such issues as economic cooperation, water sharing and refugees.

And finally Israelis and Palestinians would launch so-called "final status" talks to thrash out a permanent peace agreement covering such central

issues as the borders and status of the Palestinian entity, the fate of Jewish settlements, Jerusalem and refugees.

The Israeli reports said Mr. Netanyahu's plan offered nothing new in substance and appeared above all designed to counter a British initiative outlined last week by Foreign Secretary Robin Cook.

Mr. Cook said the initiative would involve demanding that Israel carry out "substantial, credible and urgent" troop withdrawals from the West Bank and halt all building of Jewish settlements in Palestinian areas.

Mr. Netanyahu has ruled out any halt in settlement building and offered only a limited and conditional troop withdrawal from the West Bank prior to a final status accord.

Mr. Arafat warned in a speech on Saturday that the peace process was "dying" due to Mr. Netanyahu's refusal to carry out a major troop withdrawal and Israel's reluctance to fulfil interim peace accords.

These notably involve the opening of the Gaza airport and industrial zone as well as a planned sea-port and free passage corridors through Israel from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip.

The Palestinians say Israel has been blocking agreement on all four projects by insisting on exces-

sive control over security at the sites.

Mr. Netanyahu's plan made no mention of either the harbour or free passage corridors.

Meanwhile, the Palestinians rebuffed Sunday a call by Mr. Netanyahu for a meeting with President Arafat, saying the Israeli prime minister's latest offers to break the deadlock in the peace process are empty posturing.

Mr. Arafat's international cooperation minister, Nabil Shaath, accused Mr. Netanyahu of making the proposals only to head off a European plan which pressures Israel to make concessions to the Palestinians.

"Arafat has no objection in principle to meeting him. It's just that these meetings have not produced a thing since Netanyahu came to office" in June 1996, Mr. Shaath told AFP.

Mr. Netanyahu "calls for a meeting with Arafat as if the problem were that Arafat refuses to negotiate with him," he said.

Mr. Arafat, president of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), will meet Mr. Netanyahu only if the Israeli leader announces his readiness to go ahead with a series of promised troop withdrawals in the West Bank, Mr. Shaath said.

Israeli soldiers wound four students in Hebron

(Continued from page 1)

transferred to a hospital in Jerusalem suffering from serious eye injuries while the other three were in moderate condition.

The Israeli army said it was checking the report.

"This is not the first attack on the school. We're always being attacked. First, it was the [Jewish] settlers. It won't be the last time. The soldiers tried to come with the excuse that boys were throwing stones at them. We didn't see anything like this," said headmaster Talab Abdul Majid Al Tarawah.

"This is not the ideal atmosphere for studying. Results have been worsening. The students are scared to enter and leave the school," he told reporters.

Abbas Zaki, a Palestin-

ian Legislative Council member in charge of Hebron affairs for the Palestinian National Authority, accused Israel of trying to intimidate the school into closing down.

"There have been previous attempts by the Israeli army to clear the area of the school. There's nothing we can do. We can only complain to the DCO [joint Israeli-Palestinian office] but they don't do anything practical," Mr. Zaki said.

Hebron is home to 100,000 Palestinians. There are 400 Jewish settlers. Israel withdrew troops from most of the town last year under an agreement with the Palestinians but still deploys around Jewish enclaves.

Iraq, Kuwait to hold talks on missing

(Continued from page 1)

The meetings are the latest in a series by a working group of a Geneva-based commission trying to account for people who went missing.

Kuwait wants Iraq to account for more than 600 Kuwaitis and others who disappeared during the occupation.

Kuwait and the U.S. say a full accounting is one of several conditions Iraq must meet

before economic sanctions imposed after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait can be lifted.

Iraq has repeatedly denied holding any Kuwaitis in its prisons, saying it would do it no good to keep them in jail since their detention would prolong sanctions.

Last month Iraq freed three Kuwaitis and a Saudi it held on charges of illegal entry.

Regent receives governor of Algiers

(Continued from page 1)

During the meeting, which was also attended by Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi, Dr. Majali called for strengthening the links between the peoples of both countries and expressed hope that Algeria would soon overcome the bloody disturbances that have been causing so much suffering to the Algerian people.

Mr. Rahmani said his country appreciates Jordan's support for Algeria, describing bilateral ties as brotherly and continually improving.

He said the Algerian people will never forget Jordan's support for them dur-

ing the colonial era, after the country won its independence, and during the subsequent reconstruction.

After the meeting, Dr. Abbadi said Amman Municipality and Algiers plan to cooperate to provide better services to their residents, including creating public gardens.

Earlier Sunday, Mr. Rahmani held talks with Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Environment Tawfiq Kreishan.

Mr. Kreishan outlined the ministry's duties and plans, as well as its role in promoting services for communities through local councils.

He noted that Jordan's 468 local councils receive

support for their operations from the ministry.

Jordan is ready to begin cooperation and exchange expertise with Algerian cities in general, and Algiers in particular, concerning local government issues.

Mr. Rahmani presented a briefing on Algiers' plans for developing services. He said that due to the present disturbances and extremist attacks in Algeria, a large sector of the population has been moving from rural to urban areas, especially Algiers.

This has resulted in the need to develop and modernise urban infrastructure, he added.

Annan, France say U.S. must go back to council before military action if Iraq fails to comply

(Continued from page 1)

resort to force will not arise," Mr. Vedrine said in an interview with the Saudi newspaper Al Sharq Al Awsat.

He stressed that Washington and London were alone in their interpretation of a resolution voted by the 15-member Security Council to endorse the Feb. 23 accord on arms inspections between Iraq and Mr. Annan.

"Only the United States and Britain interpreted the text" as an automatic resort to military force if Baghdad fails to live up to the accord on full and unconditional access for U.N. weapons inspectors, the foreign minister said.

"The United States cannot fail to take into account the opinion of the other member states of the council, especially as this is the view of the majority," he said.

Resolution 1154 warned of "severe consequences" if Iraq violates the accord it signed with the U.N. secretary general to open eight "presidential sites" to U.N. weapons inspectors who will be accompanied by diplomats.

"The crisis over inspections of presidential sites has been resolved, so long as the parties concerned respect their commitments, but the Iraq problem is not yet over," said Mr. Vedrine. "It will be over when all the inspections have taken

places, and when the Security Council will be able to implement paragraph 22 of Resolution 687, calling for the lifting of sanctions once Iraq has been disarmed, he said.

Mr. Vedrine said the foreign ministry director-general, Bertrand Dufourcq, stressed during his talks in Baghdad last week "that France expects Iraq to meet its obligations."

And "President Saddam Hussein gave assurances that Iraq would fulfil all its commitments," he said. "We hope that this will happen as soon as possible, but nobody can fix a date" for the lifting of the sanctions in force since Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, said Mr. Vedrine.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Private sector urged not to continue adopting old mentality to run businesses

THE ECONOMIC environment Jordan's private sector will be facing over the coming 10 years will be totally different from the climate under which it grew in the past, a representative of the private sector has said. As a member of the Amman Chamber of Industry, Zaki Ayyoubi said the changes require restructuring the private sector to transform it from services and industrial production designed for the local market to an output that primarily targets the outside market. Dr. Ayyoubi noted that such a transformation will take place under extremely stiff competition which the Jordanian economy has not yet witnessed at the regional level and with countries that are larger and much richer than ours.

Dr. Ayyoubi said the restructuring would require raising the level of technical, administrative, marketing and export capabilities in order to be able to restructure the financing and investment mechanisms. He also mentioned the importance of raising the qualitative level of all workers in the productive sectors whether they are factories, banks, service companies or hotels.

"If privatising the private sector means raising the competitiveness and administrative efficiency to respond to consumer demands inside Jordan and outside market, then I say 'yes, we need to privatise the private sector', Dr. Ayyoubi stressed. He added: "If the method of work

remains as it is in the public sector institutions, then the transfer of ownership from the state to the private sector will not change anything and will not add anything." Thabet Al Taher, president of the National Petroleum Company and a prominent member of the Jordanian Businessmen Association, emphasised that the main objective for the privatisation is to upgrade the efficiency of management at institutions which are to be transferred to the private sector. Otherwise, the privatisation loses its purpose, he said.

Mr. Taher elaborated: "It is not reasonable that the private sector continues to operate with the same mentality that was used twenty years ago." He emphasised that despite the fact that the private sector enjoys many experiences and qualifications, it should not mean that "we should remain as we are" in the coming stage.

Yusuf Mansur, head of the technical unit at the Ministry of Planning, described the private sector as being reliant on government tenders. He blamed the government for precipitating damaging practices by stressing pricing and not quality when evaluating bids for government tenders.

Dr. Mansur also saw the lack of competition in many sectors managed by the private sector as another reason for the deterioration of the private sector and its unwillingness to develop (Al-Dustour).

Concern heightens over dismissal of tens of employees from Jordanian banks

By Issam Qadmani and Abdul Salam Gharaibeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Association of Banks' employees has expressed concern over the dismissal of large numbers of bankers and said it will raise the issue with the concerned banking authorities.

The Association's Vice-President Akram Nimri told the Jordan Times that the association will discuss the dismissals with the management of the concerned banks in order to put an end to these moves, noting that the dismissals have caused deep concerns among bank employees in general.

Mr. Nimri said the Bank of Jordan, the Jordan Gulf Bank, the Union Bank, the

Housing Bank, and the Arab Land Bank have laid off quite a substantial number of employees in the course of what they described as a restructuring process which started by the middle of last year and continued in the new year.

According to Haidar Rashid who represents the association in the executive bureau of the Federation of Jordanian Labour Unions, around one hundred employees have already been laid off. He expected more dismissals to follow.

Bank employees have been reported as saying that the dismissals resulted from a drop in the banks' operations and profits last year.

Mr. Nimri said the management of Jordanian banks claimed they were facing

difficult circumstances and that the country was witnessing economic recession. But he argued that the 1997 balance sheets of the banks show clearly that they have made profits despite the recession.

According to Mr. Nimri, the management of the banks had pledged in the past years to refrain from dismissing any employee but they have now gone back on their promise and laid off some of their staff.

According to Mr. Rashid, should the dismissal moves continue the association's general assembly would have to meet to discuss appropriate measures that should be taken to confront this arbitrary action.

Housing Bank General Manager Abdul Qader

Dweik denied that there were mass dismissals from his bank but he said that resignations occur every year and for different reasons.

Admitting that the bank was undergoing a restructuring programme, Mr. Dweik said this programme entails some changes and the usage of high technology in bank operations which could lead to a redundancy of some of the unproductive employees. However, he denied that there were dismissals and said that the surplus employees were being transferred to other posts.

He said thirty Housing Bank employees have resigned for private reasons and the bank have nothing to do with it. He also denied

that the shareholders in the Housing Bank have any say in the restructuring programme.

Fayez Abu Encin, General Manager of the Jordan Gulf Bank, told the Jordan Times that his bank has been facing a mounting problem since 1980s concerning the number of employees. He said some of the employees have failed to improve their performance which prompted the bank to employ other employees. As such, the bank became overstaffed with expenses increasing and profits declining.

He said the bank, which has twenty branches around the country, currently employs 600 people.

Asian banks brace for worse times as crisis hits bottom lines

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Asian banks and finance institutions which have so far survived the regional turmoil are bracing themselves for worse to come as bad loans start ravaging balance sheets, bankers and economists say.

With Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea in recession, corporate borrowers collapsing, consumer confidence at rock bottom and the real estate market choked by a glut,

banks are expecting more defaults, prompting exceptional provisions for bad loans which are eating into profit margins.

Stockbroking and property activities which had helped buoy regional banks' profit levels during the Asian boom could also hurt the bottom line.

"You ain't seen nothing yet," said Song Seng Wun, regional economist with GK

Goh securities in Singapore after the island's regionally-exposed banks reported sharp drops in profits, with one small bank suffering a rare loss.

"If you call this poor, you should call again in six months' time," he warned.

Global credit assessor Moody's Investors Service downgraded the outlook of Singapore's leading banks from "stable" to "negative"

last week to reflect "the possible deterioration in regional conditions."

"I anticipate that economic growth will decelerate more in the second half of the year and that, ultimately, will mean loans which have been on the margins are going to fall into the non-performing category," Song said.

"I think that the latest results really only reflect the beginning effect of the first round of

the turmoil," he said.

In Thailand, where the Asian financial crisis began last July, four commercial banks have been taken over by the central bank since the beginning of the year after failing to find foreign partners to help them in a desperately-needed recapitalisation ordered by the authorities.

In December, 56 debt-ridden finance firms blamed for setting off the Thai and eventually the regional crisis were closed down as part of efforts to overhaul a financial sector saddled with an estimated \$35 billion in bad debts run-up mainly in the property industry.

The authorities used a total of 716 billion baht (\$27 billion) in failed rescue bids in the financial sector.

In Indonesia, currently the focus of the international community because of delayed reforms, the government closed down 16 banks in November. But Bank Jakarta, controlled by President Suharto's half-brother Probo-suto, reopened after a court ruled in its favour.

The owners of another closed bank, Bank Andromeda, were allowed to buy another bank, Bank Alfa. The owners include a son of President Suharto.

The Central Bank Indonesia has also been injecting money into Indonesian private banks to help them pay off crippling foreign debt, foreign bankers said. More than 200 banks remain in operation, many ripe for mergers.

Four state banks — Bank Pembangunan Indonesia, Bank Bumi Daya, Bank Dagang Negara and Bank Ekspor Impor Indonesia — will be merged into a single new bank.

In Malaysia, no banks have collapsed or been shut down but the central bank announced that Malaysia's sixth-largest bank, Sime Bank Bhd., suffered a first-half loss of 1.57 billion ringgit (\$436 million) and required at least 1.2 billion ringgit in fresh capital.

The Central Bank Negara Malaysia also said Bank Bumiputra Bhd., the second-largest bank, needed about 750 million ringgit in new capital while two finance companies required a combined 33 million ringgit.

"What we have disclosed is not the tip of the iceberg but the iceberg itself," said Fong Wen Phak, Malaysia's deputy central bank governor.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates		Prices as at 8/03/98 19:43	
Currency	Rate	Currency	Rate
US Dollar	1.8830	GBP	1.4897
DE Mark	0.5466	CHF	0.8127
GB Sterling	1.8830	JPY	0.0127
FR Franc	0.0078	HK Dollar	0.0243
JP Yen	0.0078	US Dollar	0.5466
CA Dollar	0.7042	GBP	0.5466
IT Lira	0.0006	CHF	0.8127
Nk Gulder	0.4840	JPY	0.0127
FR Franc	0.0078	HK Dollar	0.0243

Middle Eastern Currencies		Prices as at 8/03/98 19:43	
Currency	Rate	Currency	Rate
US Dollar	0.7080	GBP	0.5466
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	CHF	0.8127
Saudi Riyal	0.2667	JPY	0.0127
Bahraini Dinar	0.2667	US Dollar	0.5466
Qatar Dinar	0.2667	GBP	0.5466
Kuwait Dinar	0.2667	CHF	0.8127
UAE Dirham	0.2667	JPY	0.0127
Egyptian Pound	0.2667	US Dollar	0.5466

Energy		Mid-East Currencies	
Commodity	Price	Currency	Rate
Brent	12.85	SA Riyal	0.2667
WTI	14.07	AE Dirham	0.2667
Bonny	12.85	KW Dinar	0.2667
Dubai	11.90	BH Dinar	0.2667
UL Gas	148.00	CY Pound	0.2667

Metal Prices		Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)	
Commodity	Price	Currency	Rate
Gold (oz's)	294.15	USD	5.55
Silver (oz's)	8.07	GBP	7.38
Platinum (oz's)	380	JPY	0.34
Al (3 Months)	1.14	DEM	3.49
Al (6 Months)	1.14	FRF	0.68
Al (9 Months)	1.14	ITL	5.82

Main Equity Indices		JOD Cross Rates	
Index	Value	Currency	Rate
New York	8669.39	US Dollar	0.7080
DOW JONES	8669.39	GB Sterling	1.4897
S&P 500	1055.88	DE Mark	0.3698
FT-SE 100	5782.5	CHF	0.8127
Nikkei 225	17191.59	JP Yen	0.0078
CAC 40	3483.22	Nk Gulder	0.4840
DAX	4715.95	FR Franc	0.0078

Energy		JOD Cross Rates	
Commodity	Price	Currency	Rate
Coffee (Arabica)	154.08	US Dollar	0.7080
Cocoa (Bitter)	1945	GB Sterling	1.4897
Sugar (Soft)	270.8	DE Mark	0.3698
Wheat (Soft)	95	CHF	0.8127
Soya (Soft)	28.45	JP Yen	0.0078
Tea (Soft)	180	Nk Gulder	0.4840
Barley (Soft)	0	FR Franc	0.0078
Rice (Soft)	400	ITL	5.82

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET									
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHEIKH SAUD									
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179									
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 08/03/1998									
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	QTY.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
346.000	250.000	ARAB BANK	15.6	1.28	15	440	149180	339.00	339.00
2.340	1.600	JOR. PETROL. REF.	8.2	0.00	2	700	1267	1.82	1.81
S 3.540	1.330	BANK OF JORDAN	4.3	0.00	4	11900	16065	1.36	1.35
S 2.680	1.650	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.3	6.07	25	16850	29130	1.72	1.72
4.150	1.850	JOR. PETROL. BANK	9.7	0.00	16	10320	51597	5.00	4.91
4.180	1.850	JOR. KIMWAT BANK	9.7	0.00	1	270	1.87	1.82	0.05
920	620	JOR. GULF BANK	4.1	10.14	5	1850	1294	7.0	6.9
S 4.020	1.990	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	10.4	4.71	20	7150	14602	2.04	2.04
1.530	1.020	UNION BK. S.V. INV.	2.0	0.00	1	50	53	1.02	1.03
M 2.350	1.610	JOR. INV. FUND BANK/MBM	2	0.00	5	3850	6648	1.65	1.72
1.500	800	SEIT. AL-HAL (BEITINA)	6	16.67	5	950	853	86	90
BANK SECTOR TOTALS									
INDEX: 123.27	INDEX: -0.03	99	54210	270961					
4.150	3.890	JERUSALEM INSUR.	10.5	5.17	8	53340	214443	4.00	3.87
2.400	1.590	JOR. FRANCH INSUR.	6.6	10.64	5	9500	22608	2.26	2.35
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS									
INDEX: 123.27	INDEX: -0.35	13	64840	237050					
2.140	1.550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	10.1	4.76	14	10770	22733	2.12	2.10
1.550	930	RAIL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	22	14582	16740	1.15	1.14
1.610	9.270	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	21.0	0.00	22	7550	3149	4.40	4.1
9.270	6.700	ALRAI	9.4	6.47	6	1100	10185	9.23	9.27
4.600	2.890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	11.2	1.78	10	5750	26123	4.55	4.50
1.090	900	SARKA EDUCATION	7	0.00	5	4200	4032	97	96
1.830	1.630	UNIFIED CO.	7.7	6.29	15	7950	13964	1.78	1.75
810	600	UNION LAND DEV.	4.7	0.00	1	700	483	7.0	6.9
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS									
INDEX: 122.41	INDEX: -0.54	85	52602	97408					
4.450	2.690	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.2	3.67	30	21200	64117	3.04	3.00
4.140	3.050	JOR. PROSPERITY MINES	10.5	2.99	30	1500	1675	3.35	3.35
11.160	9.200	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.5	8.23	22	21404	31428	10.90	10.80
1.410	1.040	MOULDER INDUSTRIES	10.7	8.13	1	250	308	1.17	1.23
2.610	1.260	INDUSTRIAL COM. AGR.	9	0.00	3	394	508	1.29	1.28
5.700	3.440	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	15.2	3.64	87	20623	113981	5.59	5.50
4.350	4.400	DAR ALAMIA DV. INV.	15.4	3.97	11	14400	90719	6.30	6.29
3.460	2.220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	6.9	8.50	41	24500	72064	2.87	2.94
610	400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	11.2	0.00	83	138150	72678	52	53
1.160	680	JORDAN PAPER CORP. TRD.	25.1	0.00	2	500	410	79	82
1.140	660	NATIONAL STEEL TRD.	9	0.00	3	1050	726	67	70
650	510	NATIONAL IND.	9	0.00	1	1000	580	60	58
1.030	370	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	54	62050	28349	44	46
760	500	JOR. MOBILE IND.	9	0.00	57	8000	4730	60	58
2.320	1.380	UNIV. CHEM. IND.	14.2	6.33	8	1750	2765	1.50	1.58
S 3.000	920	RAIL. CABLE WIRE. HFAC	28.7	0.00	70	103200	125504	1.21	1.19
790	530	JOR. SELF-PRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	57	72650	46887	1.63	1.65
1.560	1.180	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	18.4	4.86	88	17350	106397	1.44	1.44
1.700	1.010	UNIV. MOON. IND.	10.0	2.20	101	145450	151511	1.00	1.05
1.410	690	JOR. IND. RESOURCES	11.0	12.20	31	21790	17799	81	82
1.620	1.350	RAIL. CHLORINE	14.4	4.58	14	4000	6145	1.55	1.53
1.050	810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	19.2	0.00	100	121350	129282	1.05	1.05
1.880	1.290	EL - RAY READY WEAR	51.4	0.00	2	250	367	1.47	1.46
1.250	1.080	IRTEL. TOBACCO	6.7	0.00	17	15200	18450	1.21	1.22
1.220	660	UNION CH. & VEG.	53.2	0.00	1	100	117	1.18	1.17
830	660	JORDAN STEEL	37.1	6.10	75	160450	134278	83	82
840	570	MID-EAST COMPLEX	8.0	15.38	40	20250	143158	66	65
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS									
INDEX: 116.75	INDEX: -0.30	948	1253921	1567987					
GRAND TOTAL									
INDEX: 171.77	INDEX: -0.16	1145	1425573	2173005					
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 08/03/1998									
M 1.050	960	EXPORT & FTR. BAK. 75%	17.8	0.00	6	4500	3210	98	96
470	300	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	9	0.00	1	100	35	34	35
530	340	JOR. TRADE FACT.	10.7	0.00	6	12500	505	41	41
800	660	UNION INV. 50%	35	0.00	35	11200	27072	74	74
620	360	ARAB FTR. INVEST.	9	0.00	23	36900	17458	48	47
780	610	AL-DAMLIYAH 75%	66.2	0.00	2	1500	670	71	69
M 1.220	1.000	SPECIALIZED JOR. 75%	9	0.00	1	5000	4850	1.22	1.22
290	140	JOR. IND. MATCH-VEICO	9	0.00	6	23500	3425	15	14
640	370	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	9	8600	4214	47	49
470	240	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	41.5	0.00	32	114300	42148	34	36
360	150	RAIL. YEMKILA	9	0.00	13	7950	3750	37	39
M 1.230	980	RAIL. PORTFOLIO. NAMCO	9	0.00	20	35550	14110	39	39
660	380	READY MIX CONCRETE	13.3	0.00	2	750	825	1.16	1.10
550	300	KIDNEY PHARM. 50%	9	0.00	1	1000	4616	68	67
730	450	YEMKILA	9	0.00	1	100	72	72	72
480	240	INDS. ENG.	9	0.00	10	9700	2815	29	30
830	510	INDS. CERAMIC	14.4	0.00	13	4600	2565	30	30
M 470	250	AMMAN PHARM. IND.	9	0.00	12	48150	31784	67	66
470	390	PEARL SAN. P. CONV.	9	0.00	7	2200	824	39	37
740	450	NATL. POLYMER	9	0.00	13	4000	56	50	50
M 850	470	SPECIALIZED HEATING 75%	9	0.00	13	18600	6892	63	62
M 1.000	660	NAT. ALUMINUM. 75%	96.0	0.00	25	53342	23489	69	69
1.100	720	ARAB INTL. FOOD FACT.	54.9	0.00	1	100	100	1.00	1.00

'Gentleman' Coulthard lets Hakkinen in for Grand Prix win

Schumacher blows his top after Ferrari engine blows up

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Mika Hakkinen launched a new era of Formula One domination for McLaren on Sunday after teammate David Coulthard let him overtake to win the Australian Grand Prix.

The McLaren Mercedes pair led from start to finish of the first race of the 1998 season.

But it was the manner of the 29-year-old Finn's second Grand Prix victory that astounded rivals and spectators alike. Hakkinen hailed his Scottish teammate as "a gentleman."

Hakkinen lost the lead to Scotsman Coulthard after a pit stop blunder. But after radio consultations with McLaren boss Ron Dennis, Coulthard gave way to Hakkinen on the penultimate lap.

Hakkinen won with Coulthard on his tail. Germany's Heinz-Harald Frentzen in a Williams racechrome was third and Eddie Irvine of Northern Ireland in a Ferrari was fourth.

Williams' reigning world drivers' champion Jacques Villeneuve was fifth. Two-time world champion Michael Schumacher was forced out in the sixth lap after his Ferrari engine blew up.

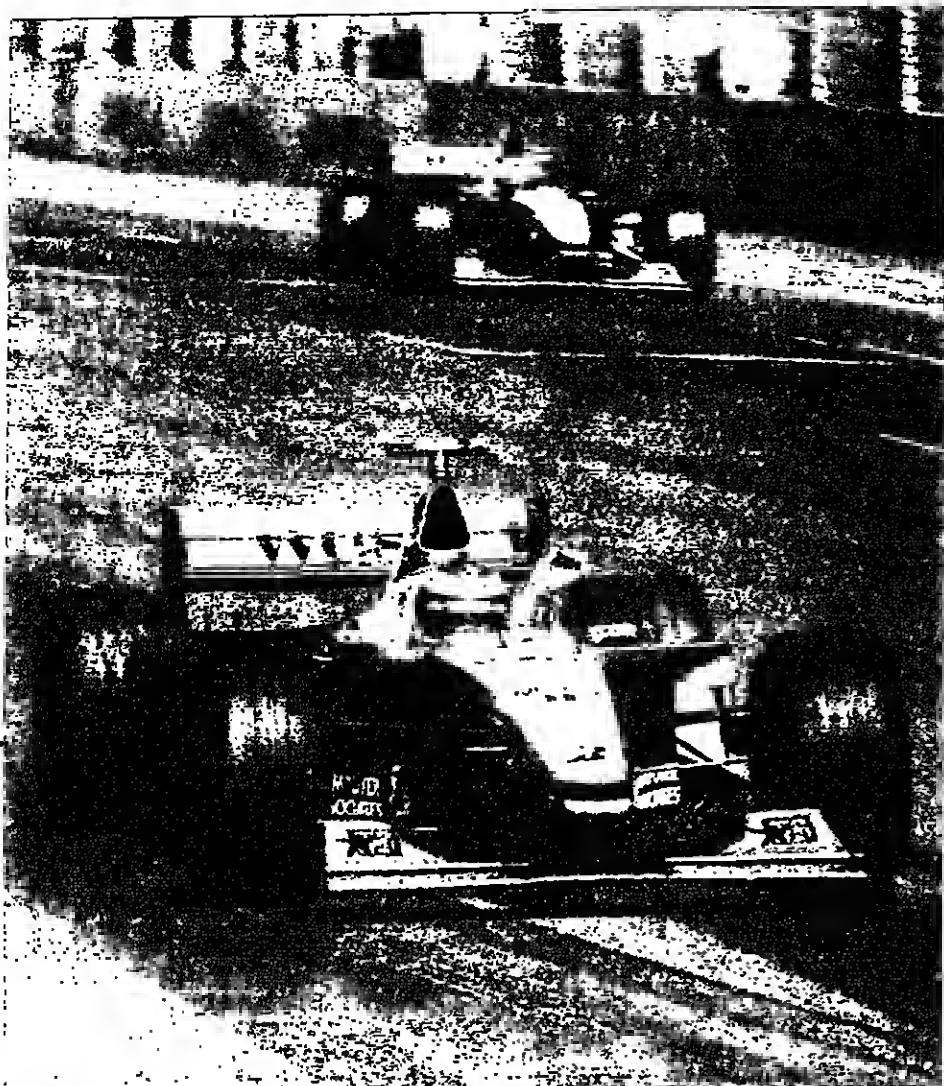
Coulthard told how he and Hakkinen had an "agreement" that whoever was leading at the first corner should get priority if the two were in a position to decide the winner.

Hakkinen started in pole position with Coulthard also on the front line.

"I was pretty confident that I would get their first, but Mika was just great," said the 26-year-old Scot, who has won three grands prix, including in Australia last year.

Hakkinen threw away his lead when he went in for a second pit stop before his team were ready. He roared past the McLaren garage as fast as he could and back onto the track.

That put Coulthard in con-



Australian Formula One Grand Prix winner Mika Hakkinen of Finland waves to the crowd as he crosses the finish line followed by teammate David Coulthard of Scotland March 8. Coulthard slowed during the last lap allowing Hakkinen to pass and win, honoring a pre-race agreement. (Reuters photo)

rol of the race. But he slowed while the negotiations were pursued over the radio.

"It was clear to me that Mika was in front and he would have been in front if he had not had a misunderstanding with our team and as a team we knew that if we raced each other 110 per cent there was a chance we would not finish the race," said Coulthard.

"I thought about it for about a lap and got back to the team and said 'okay, I reckon I can let him catch me (two or three laps from end) and that's exactly what

I did," he said. "I don't see why it's so difficult to understand that if you make an agreement with someone, and you look someone in the eye, then what's the problem?"

The Finn, who won his first race at the season-ending European Grand Prix last year — when Coulthard also let him by — was clearly relieved to have got his victory.

Hakkinen denied he was "uncomfortable" about his two victories.

"I just want to say to David thank you very much. It was very fair racing and

excellent team work."

He added: "We have a very special relationship and what David did was just remarkable. Looking back in history I don't see many drivers doing that."

"I've been in Formula One for many years, seen a lot of things happen and what he did today was a gentleman's way to do motor racing," said Hakkinen.

The bizarre events could not take away the glory from McLaren who have fought back to front place in Formula One after nearly a decade of domination by

Williams.

The McLaren's new V10 Mercedes engine is now setting the pace and Adrian Newey, the former Williams chief designer, has given McLaren a clear edge despite new speed restricting rules.

Cars must be narrower and tyres must have grooves, but Hakkinen's fastest lap of 1min 31.649sec around the 5.3 kilometre (3.3 mile) Albert Park circuit was only 1.1 seconds slower than Frentzen's all time record in 1995.

McLaren also scored the first victory for Bridgestone tyres, who reentered Formula One last season.

Frentzen and all the other cars were lapped by the McLarens.

The result will set off alarm bells for Williams and Ferrari who fought out last year's title. World champion Villeneuve will be especially disappointed with his performance.

Michael Schumacher was among 13 drivers who failed to finish the race.

The 29-year-old German flung his steering wheel out of his Ferrari in a rage after being forced to quit after finishing just five laps.

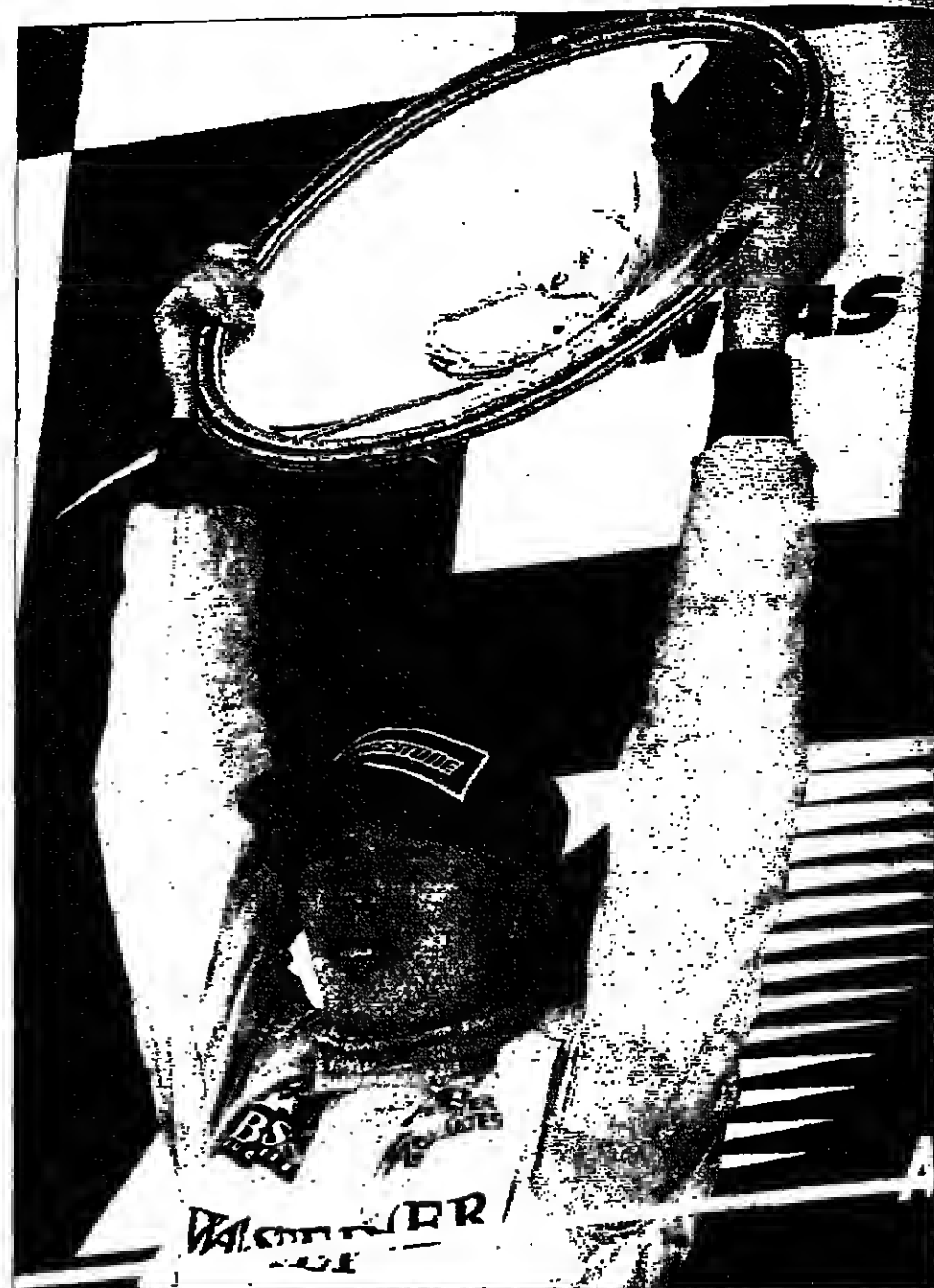
Schumacher, who was stripped of his second championship placing last year as punishment for his controversial shunt on world champion Villeneuve, has still to win in Australia in eight drives.

"The engine blew up," he said. "There were a lot of leaves around the track and some might have gone into the cooling system. I don't know."

"Obviously, we are all not very happy about what happened after all winter testing and doing so much effort," he said.

Schumacher's younger brother Ralf was forced out of the race on lap two when his Jordan collided and span off with Jan Magnussen's Stewart Ford.

The next Grand Prix is in Brazil on March 29.



Finland's Mika Hakkinen holds his Australian Formula One trophy aloft after winning the season-opening event in Melbourne March 8. Hakkinen beat teammate David Coulthard of Scotland with Germany's Heinz-Harald Frentzen, a Williams driver, third. (Reuters photo)

Lens challenge continues but PSG jeered off

PARIS (AFP) — Lens kept their unexpected French title challenge very much on the rails Saturday night when they came away from champions Monaco with a 1-0 victory to move into second place.

A 53rd minute goal from Stephane Ziani was enough to sink Monaco, who drew the home-leg of their European Cup quarter-final against Manchester United 0-0 on Wednesday, and put Lens just one point behind pacesetters Metz, who won Friday's top-of-the-table clash against Marseille 3-2.

Monaco slipped down to fourth place — three points clear of disappointing Paris St. Germain who were held 1-1 at home by Toulouse.

Paris St. Germain's run of disappointments continued when a 58th minute goal by Marco Simone was cancelled out two minutes later by Ivory Coast striker Joel Tchi who fired home after racing on to a through ball from Thierry Moreau.

In the other matches Bordeaux defeated visiting Guingamp 4-2. Rennes were held 2-2 at home by Le Havre, and Auxerre came away 2-1 winners from Bastia.

Canes moved off the foot of the table with only their seventh win of the season when they beat fellow-strugglers Strasbourg 1-0 thanks to a 78th minute penalty from Vandenberg. Chateauroux dropped to the bottom of the table when they were beaten 1-0 by visiting Montpellier.

Yankees sign Cuban defector Hernandez

NEW YORK (AFP) — The New York Yankees, who already own baseball's highest payroll, announced Saturday that they have signed highly sought Cuban defector Orlando Hernandez to a four-year contract.

Terms were not disclosed, but it is believed that Hernandez, a 28-year-old right-handed pitcher, signed a four-year deal worth more than \$6 million.

Hernandez has not pitched since 1995 but is expected to join the Yankees at their spring training camp in Tampa, Florida next week with a chance of winning a spot in the rotation. Known as "El Duque," the 6-foot-3, 210-pound Hernandez posted a 129-47 career record for the Cuban national team.

Hernandez is the older half-brother of Florida Marlins right-hander Livian Hernandez, the 1997 World Series Most Valuable Player. The elder Hernandez was among eight individuals attempting to reach the United States from Cuba in a small boat last December before being forced to dock in the Bahamas due to mechanical difficulties.

Because he did not make it to the United States, Orlando Hernandez was not subject to the amateur draft and became a free agent able to sign with any major-league club. Since defecting, he was granted citizenship in Costa Rica and was courted by several teams, including the Anaheim Angels and Marlins.

Orlando Hernandez was suspended from baseball by the Cuban government for allegedly working with sports agents who helped other players defect. He was left off the team that won the gold medal at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

Barcelona crush Real

MADRID (AFP) — The Former Monaco striker, Sonny Anderson, stabbed home the first goal in the 70th minute thanks to a neat cross from the right from fellow-Brazilian Rivaldo. And ten minutes later Portuguese front-runner Luis Figo, who went round Roberto Carlos, made it 2-0 with a superb shot which left German goalkeeper Bodo Illgner no chance.

Rivaldo, who seemed to be at the heart of all that was good for the home side, set up a third goal when he put Barcelona's third Brazilian, Giovani, through with five minutes left to play.

In the first-half, the Barcelona defence, without suspended Portuguese central defender Fernando Couto, had to survive some difficult moments.

Dortmund humiliated by 1860 Munich; Cologne win

COLOGNE (AFP) — European Cup holders Borussia Dortmund were humiliated by TSV 1860 Munich on Saturday, losing 4-2 in their Bundesliga meeting.

Not even harsh words from Dortmund's Italian coach Nevio Spila at halftime could save the German giants from their most embarrassing defeat of the season.

1860, who are in 14th place in the championship, had all four goals on the board within the opening 25 minutes through Miroslav Stievl (4th), Bernhard Winkler (15th) and a double by Bernd Hobsch (16th and 25th).

1860 didn't ease up and went close to a fifth when Dortmund struck from nowhere late in the match.

German playmaker Andy Moller scored in the 81st minute and Rene Schneider further reduced the gap in the 84th minute.

It was a deeply disappointing showing by Dortmund and they can surely bury any lingering hopes of winning a UEFA Cup place if a drastic improvement is not evident in the next few weeks.

10-man FC Cologne pulled off a pucky 2-0 victory at home over Hertha Berlin. The relegation threatened side, who were recording their second successive win, had captain Ralf Happpmann sent off in the 36th minute for a second

bookable offence.

Midfielder Rene Tretschok, though, calmed the nerves of the Cologne fans, who have seen their side lack 50 goals this season, with a 41st minute strike but then missed a penalty early in the second-half.

"We played better with 10 men before the break than with 11, which is something we need to have a good thing about," coach Lorenz Koestner said.

"Maybe we have started a mini series of wins," he added.

Cologne doggedly defended their lead and ensured the three points when Markus Muench scored from a rare counter attack shortly before time.

Cologne's fellow relegation battlers Borussia Monchengladbach saved the job of their coach Norbert Meier with an emphatic 5-2 victory over Karlsruhe.

On Thursday Meier told journalists he would no longer be on the bench on Monday if Gladbach didn't take full points. His players took that to heart and played their best match of the season.

They led on two occasions only to have Karlsruhe equalise each time, but then former German international midfielder Stefan Effenberg struck twice (68th and 90th) and Stefan Paslack also completed a double with an 88th

minute goal.

The result lifted Monchengladbach off the bottom of the table to 15th while Karlsruhe drop to 17th, both on 26 points.

"You have to leave the coach to work in peace and quiet," Meier snapped afterwards.

"You lose a few times and you're down the bottom and suddenly only the coach is under fire. That gives the players a wonderful alibi. They open the paper and see, 'Ha I'm not mentioned, I can't be so bad'. Everything negative focuses on the trainer and that is dangerous," he added.

"I don't think we played so badly," Karlsruhe coach Winfried Schaefer said.

"We have to look to ourselves and every player has to fight so that we stay in the first division," he added.

Arminia Bielefeld went to the bottom of the table after a 3-3 draw against German Cup finalists Duisburg.

They took the lead with six minutes to go through a goal by Iranian Ali Daei but could not hold it. Duisburg's Togolese striker Bachirou Salou, who had already scored in the 75th minute, bagged a second goal with just two minutes left on the clock.

Kaiserslautern remain top of the Bundesliga on 54 points after

Friday evening's 1-1 draw at Werder Bremen.

It was fast and furious in the opening half with Bremen denied a penalty when Swiss playmaker Ciriaco Sforza tripped Austrian international Andreas Herzog in the area.

"We didn't play well enough to win," coach Otto Rehagel said. "We should be happy with the result although we were lucky on a few occasions," he added.

Rehagel received a warm welcome in Bremen where he spent 14 consecutive years as coach.

The fans held up signs painted with hearts and children presented him with stem roses.

Bayern Munich (47 points) are seven points behind Kaiserslautern and can close the gap on Sunday when they travel to UEFA Cup holders Schalke 04.

"We can do our sums," Rehagel said.

"We know we are in the final straight and that the opposition is hard on our heels...Of course when you are sitting in such a good position you want to defend it," he added.

PHILADELPHIA "1" Demi Moore ... in G.I. JANE Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PHILADELPHIA "2" Pierce Brosnan as James Bond... in 007...TOMORROW NEVER DIES Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PLAZA I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE Shows: 5 p.m. only	CONCORD Adel Imam & Yusra ... in RISALA ILA AL WALI Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:15, 10:30 LONG KISS GOODNIGHT Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:15, 10:30	GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN GRAND OPENING TITANIC	GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN GRAND OPENING TITANIC	Rishan Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155 NOW ON DAILY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE Starring Hisham Yanes and his group For reservations call 4640155, 4625155
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SCOREBOARD

NBA			
Miami	94	Dallas	88
Utah	110	Milwaukee	92
Houston	108	Phoenix	89

Evert Cup

1st rd	
Sandrine Testud (Fra x9) bt Magui Serna (Spa)	6-1, 6-1
Dominique van Roost (Bel x10) bt Corina Morariu (USA)	6-1, 6-3
Meike Babel (Ger) bt Brenda Schultz-McCarthy (Ned x14)	6-7 (2/7), 6-3, 7-6 (9/7)
Anne Miller (USA) bt Sarah Taylor (USA)	6-1, 6-1
Maria Alejandra Venturi (Ven) bt Kristine Kunce (Aus)	6-3, 6-4
Tara Snyder (USA) bt Elia Ostrolovi (USA)	7-5, 6-0
Barbara Schett (Aut) bt Rita Grande (Ita)	6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 7-6 (8/6)
2nd rd	
Martina Hingis (Svi x1) bt Sarah Pitkowski (Fra)	6-2, 6-1
Lindsay Davenport (USA x2) bt Amy Frazier (USA)	6-3, 6-1
Steffi Graf (Ger x3) bt Tamarine Tanasugarn (Tha)	6-4, 6-0
Irina Spirelea (Rom x6) bt Li Fang (Chn)	7-5, 6-2
Sandra Cacic (USA) bt Nathalie Tauziat (Fra x2)	1-6, 6-2, 7-5
Venus Williams (USA x8) bt Silvia Farina (Ita)	6-3, 6-1
Natasha Zvereva (Blr x15) bt Naoko Sawamatsu (Jpn)	6-4, 6-3

Scottsdale Classic

Semi-finals	
Andre Agassi (USA) bt Tommy Haas (Ger)	6-2, 6-1
Jason Stoltenberg (Aus) bt Sjeng Schalken (Ned)	6-3, 6-3

Rotterdam tournament

Semi-finals	
Thomas Johansson (Swe) bt Brett Steven (Nzl)	6-3, 7-5
Jan Siemerink (Ned) bt Richard Krajicek (Ned x3)	6-4, 4-6, 6-4

Dutch Football Championship

Heerenveen	0	Nijmegen	3
W. II Tilburg	1	Doornichem	1

French First Division

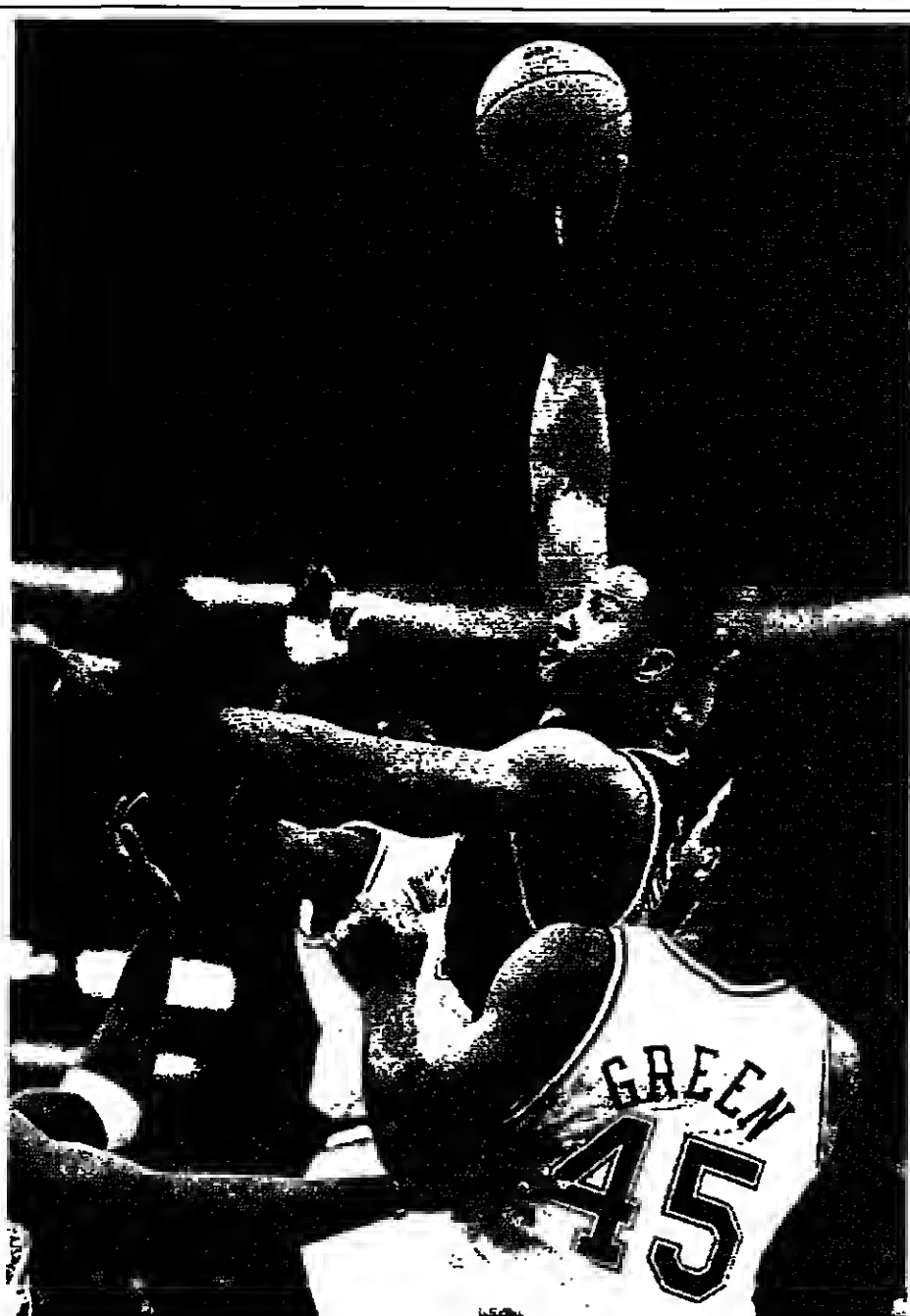
Bastia	2	Amiens	2
Bordeaux	4	Guingamp	2
Rennes	2	Le Havre	2
Monaco	0	Leas	1
Chateauroux	0	Montpellier	1
Caen	1	Strasbourg	0
P. St Germain	1	Toulouse	1

Spanish First Division

Barcelona	3	Real Madrid	0
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Belgian First Division

Antwerp	1	Beveren	0
Gent	0	Ekeren	2
Mouscron	2	Lommel	1
Lokeren	2	Anderlecht	1
Standard Liege	2	St. Trond	0
Molenbeek	0	Harelbeke	1
Charleroi	1	Aals	1



Miami Heat's Alonzo Mourning shoots for the basket as Dallas Mavericks' AC Green tries to block him during the first quarter of their NBA game (Reuters photo)

Agassi awesome in Scottsdale win

SCOTTSDALE (AFP) — Andre Agassi moved a step away from a second straight title, dashing the childhood dream of Tommy Haas Saturday with a 6-2, 6-1 victory in the semi-finals of the ATP Tour event here.

German Haas, 40th in the world to Agassi's 50th, said before the contest that he had always hoped to get a match with the 27-year-old Agassi, now storming through a comeback after dropping well out of the Top 100 in a lethargic 1997 which yielded only 12 winning matches in 12 months.

When Haas finally got his chance, he was overwhelmed. "He gave me no chance to play my game," said Haas. "He was hitting all of the lines, it was punishing. It was a good training

lesson for me."

"This has been such a great platform for me to get my year going in the right direction — there's no place I'd rather be than the final," Agassi said. "To come back and play great tennis is important for me and I've been working at it. I'm hitting the ball well, trying to enjoy it."

Agassi broke Haas early in the first set, did it again for 5-2 and began the second set with a break thanks to Haas' third double-fault of the match.

"The American dominated for the rest of the contest to close out the second set despite dropping serve for the first time in the match in the sixth game but breaking Haas back for victory. In the final he'll face Australian Jason Stoltenberg, who beat

Sjeng Schalken 6-3, 6-3.

Stoltenberg, based in Florida, has won a dozen matches this year with only four losses.

He missed the last four months of 1997 as a knee injury healed and improved his computer ranking from 79 to its current 47.

"My good start has been a little surprising for me," said Stoltenberg. "I didn't expect this sort of a start this year."

"I played very tidy today, without too many unforced errors. He made some unforced errors and double-faults and really helped me out."

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Graf on the road towards the top

INDIAN WELLS (AFP) — Steffi Graf took another small step on the road back to the summit of tennis Saturday with a second-round victory in the \$1.25 million Evert Cup.

Graf, the former World No. 1 who has fallen to 45th in the world as she battled back from a knee injury, defeated Thailand's Tamarine Tanasugarn 6-4, 6-0 to preserve her perfect singles record at Indian Wells, where she won in 1994 and 1996.

"It feels almost like a learning experience again," said Graf, who is seeded third despite the drop in her ranking.

"To try to get back in shape and try to find a rhythm — it's very difficult."

"I need lots of matches, I need a couple of tournaments to feel I'm on top of it again."

Graf had surgery on her painful left knee last June 10 and missed nine months before returning to competition in Hanover, Germany, last month. She won her first match against compatriot Andrea Glass before losing to Sabine Appelmans.

The German, who celebrates the 10th anniversary of her Golden Slam — when she won all four Grand Slam singles titles and the Olympic gold — this year, said there were times she thought she might not play again.

"In the beginning, it was a matter of being on my feet again and having no pain," she said. "The first time I was standing on the court again it was a great feeling. So, it's little steps that made me realise how much I want to play tennis."

She said her past success made it harder, in some ways, now.

"It makes it more difficult if you've played well before," she said.

"You feel you should play well, but you

know you can't. There's too many thoughts that go through your head."

"When I was younger, there weren't any thoughts."

Nowadays, it's 17-year-old Swiss Martina Hingis who racks up the victories without a thought.

The World No. 1 and top seed, playing here for the first time, defeated France's Sarah Pitkowski 6-2, 6-1 to reach the third round.

"I was little bit nervous. I hadn't played in a while," said Hingis, who opened her 1998 season with a successful defense of her Australian Open title, then lost to Lindsay Davenport in the final of the Pan Pacific in Tokyo before taking four weeks off.

Davenport, the defending champion and second seed, eased to a 6-3, 6-1 victory over fellow American Amy Frazier in the second round.

Sixth seeded Irina Spirelea of Romania, who like all the top eight had a first-round bye, advanced with a 7-5, 6-2 victory over Li Fang of China.

Tenth-seeded Belgian Dominique van Roost, who has reached the final in four of the six events she has entered this year, won her first-round match against 14th-seeded Brenda Schultz-McCarthy of the Netherlands 6-7 (2/7), 6-3, 7-6 (9/7), while unseeded American Sandra Cacic, ranked 65th in the world, ousted seventh-seeded Frenchwoman Nathalie Tauziat 1-6, 6-2, 7-5.

The Evert Cup, one of the WTA Tour's prestigious Tier One events, runs concurrently with the Champions Cup, one of the ATP Tour's big-money Super Nine events.

The men are scheduled to begin play on Monday.

Chavez title bout ends in draw

MEXICO CITY (R) —

Mexican boxing great Julio Cesar Chavez's bid for a return to glory was put on hold on Saturday as he fought to a draw with compatriot Miguel Angel Gonzalez, leaving the World Boxing Council super lightweight title vacant.

It was a fight night only Don King could love.

The famed boxing promoter put on two world championship bouts and both ended in draws, setting up potentially lucrative rematches.

Earlier on Saturday at Mexico City's largest hall ring, strawweights Ricardo "El Finito" Lopez of Mexico and Rosendo Alvarez of Nicaragua also ended in a draw.

The fight was stopped after the seventh round because of an accidental head butt that badly cut Lopez. Each fighter was ahead on one judge's

card and the third judge called it even.

The strawweight contest was supposed to be a unification bout but Lopez will retain his WBC title, while Alvarez keeps his World Boxing Association version.

Chavez (100-2-2), a former six-time champion who is considered the greatest Mexican fighter of all time, was seeking to regain some of the luster he lost in taking a pummeling from American champion Oscar De La Hoya.

But he found a worthy opponent in Gonzalez (42-1-1), a former WBC lightweight champion who bloodied Chavez's nose in the fifth round and left his left eye nearly swollen shut by night's end.

Chavez came back strong in the later rounds.

He pinned Gonzalez to the corner with a combination in the eighth round, drew blood from Gonzalez's face with a closing flurry of punches in the 11th, and put on a strong showing in the final round.

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A diplomatic mission invites applications for the position of one marketing surveyor who would be responsible for handling day-to-day economic and commercial work in the embassy including routine correspondence, liaison with importers and exporters in Jordan and India, Chambers of Commerce and business associations, and making arrangements for visits by business delegations as well as various business events. The applicant should be a graduate/postgraduate in business administration/management with a high academic record and preferably with previous work experience in handling commercial matters. Excellent command of written and spoken English and Arabic is a must. Candidates should be proficient in typing and computer skills, especially Windows 95, MS Word, Excel etc. The vacancy is immediate and the selected candidate will be required to join within this month.

Rush in your CV with references and a passport size photograph to P.O. Box 2168, Amman 11181 latest by March 16.

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a. The latest date for purchasing Tender Documents is April 15th, 1998.

b. The Tender Documents can be purchased by an authorised representative upon submission of an official request.

c. The latest date for submission of inquiries pertinent to the Tender is April 1st, 1998.

d. Bids shall be deposited in the BID BOX at the Furniture & Equipment Division / MOE, or by Mail, not later than 11:00 a.m. (local time) on April 15th, 1998.

e. The Bids shall be opened on April 15th, 1998 at 15:00 p.m. (local time).

Chairman
of Special Tenders Committee

Siemerink foils Krajicek to reach Swedish showdown

ROTTERDAM (AFP) — Dutchman Jan Siemerink reached a showdown against Thomas Johansson of Sweden in the final of the ATP event here Saturday when he chalked up a surprise 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 victory over compatriot and 1996 Wimbledon champion Richard Krajicek.

The 27-year-old Siemerink, who lost in the semi-finals of the Batteredsea tournament last weekend, took the match after breaking the fifth seeded Krajicek, ranked 10 in the world, in the 10th game of the third set.

Krajicek, who also won this tournament in 1995, had levelled the match at one set apiece when he

broke the left-handed Siemerink in the third game.

Siemerink, ranked 48th and with just two tourna-

ment wins from the 10 finals he has reached, had shocked the 26-year-old Krajicek with the quality of his returning in the first set.

Johansson scored a 6-3, 7-5 over plucky New Zealander Brett Steven in the second semi-final.



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JOB VACANCIES IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

UNDP/PAPP is implementing, jointly with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Palestinian Authority, and with funding from the Government of Japan and the Netherlands, a series of projects in the areas of Agricultural Policy and Planning and Agricultural Adaptive Research and Extension. New initiatives are also being designed in the area of Food Security Policies.

In the framework of these projects, UNDP/PAPP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Palestinian Authority, is interested in candidates for Local Senior Experts and Technical Assistance positions, with Duty stations in Al-Belreh and Gaza, in the areas of:

1. Agricultural Policy Analysis and Planning;
2. Agricultural Adaptive Research and Extension;
3. Food Security Policies.

Candidates should have degrees relevant to the positions, as well as relevant professional experience and exposure. Experience with in or with the Palestinian Authority and understanding of the present agricultural institutional set-up in the West Bank and Gaza Strip would be a strong asset. Interested candidates are requested to send their applications before 19 March 1998.

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Reference: Agricultural Sector Positions (Position 1,2, or 3)

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Annan rep to be U.N. chief's 'eyes and ears' in Baghdad

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Senior Indian diplomat Prakash Shah is preparing to leave for the Iraqi capital to be the "eyes and ears" of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

"My role is to provide the political link between the Iraqi leadership and the secretary-general," said Mr. Shah in an interview with AFP prior to his planned departure for Baghdad on Wednesday to take up his new post as Mr. Annan's special representative.

But Mr. Shah denied that he would arbitrate in case of problems involving the two main activities of the United Nations in Iraq: The U.N. weapons inspections and implementation of a humanitarian oil-for-food agreement.

"I'm not going to be an adjudicator as such, my role is to keep the dialogue open to try to solve problems with goodwill," said Mr. Shah.

He said that Mr. Annan decided to create the position following his recent visit to Baghdad "because he saw there was a vacuum of non-communication between the secretary-general and Iraq."

Mr. Shah is to serve for an initial six-month period in Baghdad.

Mr. Annan secured an agreement with the Iraqi government on Feb. 23 on opening up all Iraqi suspected weapons sites for inspection, averting U.S. military strikes against Baghdad.

The deal also establishes new procedures for the inspection of so-called presi-

denial sites, from which U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) inspectors searching for Iraqi weapons of mass destruction had been totally barred.

Mr. Annan said in his letter appointing Mr. Shah that he would help prevent problems from developing into "fully-fledged crises threatening to undermine international peace and security in the area."

Mr. Annan apparently hopes that if Iraq makes good on its promise to cooperate in future with the weapons inspectors, pressure within the 15-member U.N. Security Council will force the United States to agree to lift a crippling oil embargo.

Under U.N. resolutions, the sanctions imposed after the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait can only be lifted when the inspectors certify the dismantling of Iraq's nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and long-range missiles.

Mr. Shah, a bespectacled 58-year-old who retired from the Indian diplomatic service last August, visited Baghdad "three or four times" in the past for oil negotiations and other talks involving the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Shah handled India's external relations on oil and petrochemicals as petroleum ministry director from 1975 to 1977.

Asked about U.S. objections to his appointment, because of India's historical close ties to Iraq, Mr. Shah played down his nationality

saying that "now I am working for the United Nations as a U.N. official."

Other diplomats also noted that the U.S. objections were not directed personally at Mr. Shah, whose cool professionalism is widely acknowledged in U.N. circles.

Mr. Shah stood up to criticism from the United States in September 1996 when India, Bhutan and Libya were the only states in the U.N. General Assembly to vote against the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty banning underground nuclear explosions.

UNSCOM chairman Richard Butler, who was then Australian ambassador, was responsible for bringing the treaty to the United Nations for passage after India blocked the consensus that would have adopted the treaty in Geneva.

Some diplomats say that Mr. Annan's appointment of Mr. Shah, following the naming of Sri Lankan Jayantha Dhanapala who is to supervise the inspections of presidential sites, appears to be part of a plan aimed at reining in Mr. Butler.

The UNSCOM chief has been privately criticised by Mr. Annan and some Security Council members for his outspokenness during the four-month Iraq-U.N. crisis.

But Mr. Shah stressed that he has no supervisory function over either UNSCOM or the oil-for-aid programme.

U.N. arms team carries out inspections as Iraq warns of Ritter

BAGHDAD (AFP) — U.N. arms experts led by former U.S. marine Scott Ritter carried out a third day of inspections on Sunday, as Baghdad warned that he was capable of provoking a new crisis.

Alan Dacey, spokesman for the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of disarming Iraq, said Mr. Ritter's team left the Baghdad headquarters of UNSCOM at 9 a.m.

The team carried out three inspections of "sensitive" sites on Saturday, he said, referring to Iraqi military and intelligence facilities. They were different from three sites inspected the previous day.

"They were inspected to the satisfaction of the team, and the team received the full cooperation of the Iraqis" on Saturday, Mr. Dacey told AFP.

But the official newspaper Al Jumhuriya voiced fears that Mr. Ritter, "the man who is known for creating problems, could sabotage the accord signed with the U.N. secretary general."

Mr. Dacey, meanwhile, declined to comment on reports that Mr. Ritter's team was testing last month's accord between Iraq and U.N. chief Kofi Annan by inspecting right up to the boundaries of Iraqi presidential sites.

The Nov. 23 accord headed off the threat of a U.S.-led air strike against Iraq and laid down special arrangements for UNSCOM to enter presidential sites which Baghdad had previously declared off-limits to the inspectors.

The arrangements apply only within the boundaries mapped out by a team of U.N. surveyors whose work was completed on the eve of the accord. All other sites are subject to normal UNSCOM inspections.

Mr. Ritter, whom Baghdad has in the past branded a CIA spy, is expected to stay in Iraq until the middle of this week. His mission, which started Thursday when he arrived at the head of a 50-member team, does not cover presidential sites.

The American's last visit to Baghdad was cut short on Jan. 16 after Iraqi authorities barred him from inspecting sensitive sites on the grounds that his team was dominated by Anglo-Saxons.

Iraq accuses the United States and Britain of exploiting UNSCOM to prolong the sanctions in force against Baghdad since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The sanctions can not be lifted until the Special Commission completes its work.

On Sunday, Al Jumhuriya slammed Washington for rejecting a proposal to name a second deputy to UNSCOM Chairman Richard Butler, whose only deputy at present is Charles Diefel of the United States.

"America's refusal of the proposal is illegitimate," protested the daily. It predicted that Washington's stand would "create problems within the U.N. Security Council because of the differences between the U.S. and Russian positions."



Saudi septuplets, brothers and sisters of six more from same mother

The four boys and three girls born to Saudi Abdullah Mohammad and his forty-year-old wife lie in the Abha Hospital where they were born in January, in this picture released Saturday by the official Saudi Press Agency. Mohammad, who has been married twice before, already has six children with the mother of the septuplets (AFP photo)

Prince invites Spice Girls to royal tea party

LONDON (AFP) — The Prince of Wales has invited the Spice Girls to tea later this month at his country estate in England so they can meet Princes William and Harry again, a tabloid reported. The Sunday People said that even though Britain's pop wonders are in the middle of a world tour, they were flying back for the day to attend the engagement at Highgrove. Prince Charles has already met the feisty five some three times. At their first meeting after a concert for the Prince's Trust in Manchester, Geri pinched the royal bottom, she claimed later.

Brazil's oldest woman turns 127

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP) — Maria do Carmo Jeronimo, who can remember when she was a slave over a century ago and is regarded as the oldest woman in Brazil, has turned 127. She attributes her longevity to daily prayers and an unshakable faith in God. She claims to have been a slave until the age of 17 and, to prove her age, boasts of a birth record issued by the Roman Catholic Church which until 1890 served as civil registry office. Attending Pope John Paul II's mass last year was, do Carmo says, a dream come true. In fact she felt so emotional she fell ill for the first time in her life.

Rabbits destroy floral EU flag

YORK (AFP) — Thousands of flowers laid out to depict the European flag for a summit of EU finance ministers in Britain in two weeks' time have been eaten by rabbits. Gardeners spent \$30,000 on gardens at the Royal York Hotel in preparation for the ECOFIN conference in York, northern England. As the centerpiece of their work, thousands of yellow and blue flowers were laid out in a huge European flag, but over the last month rabbits have eaten the display. "Although we are keeping a round-the-clock watch, it looks like the bunnies have got us beat," said hotel landscape gardener Dave Mercer.

Tongue-tied Winslet recommends Dench for Oscar

LONDON (AFP) — "Titanic" star Kate Winslet says she doesn't want an Oscar for her role in the film because she wouldn't know what to say. Winslet says she's thrilled about her nomination, but insists she would have "no idea" what to do if she had to walk up on stage and say something. Give it to fellow Briton Judi Dench for her role in "Mrs Brown" instead, she suggests. "I really am not thinking about it and I honestly hope Judi Dench does win because she is so wonderful in that film," Winslet gushes. The moment of truth for both actresses will come at the Academy Awards ceremony on March 23.

Hairline crack found in Three Graces statue

LONDON (AFP) — A hairline crack has been found on one of the world's most famous sculptures, The Three Graces by Antonio Canova, previously thought to have been perfect. The crack was found after the work was sent on loan to a benefactor in Spain, said officials of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the National Gallery in Scotland, joint owners of the work. The small fault, visible to the naked eye in the \$12.3 million marble sculpture, was found when it was unpacked in Madrid, according to media reports. It is on the shoulder of the left-hand figure.

Milosevic rejects 'interference' in Kosovo

BELGRADE (AFP) — Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic met Sunday with Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem and rejected any outside "interference" in Kosovo, the Tanjug news agency reported.

Unrest in the Serbian province "can be resolved exclusively in Serbia on the basis and in the framework of its constitution and laws," Mr. Milosevic said.

He added that he was "resolutely" opposed to the "internationalisation" of the crisis in Kosovo, where ethnic Albanians are demanding independence from the rump Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

Mr. Milosevic's remarks came on the eve of a meeting in London of the six-nation Contact Group on the former Yugoslavia to discuss the bloody clampdown by Serbian police in the ethnic Albanian province.

Defending police actions, Mr. Milosevic said resolving the crisis "includes measures to effectively fight against the activities of Albanian terrorists, which have been undertaken by the competent state organs."

Earlier, the Turkish embassy in Belgrade said Mr. Cem would urge Mr. Milosevic to end the crackdown.

Israeli officers tell Netanyahu not to miss chance for peace

TEL AVIV (AFP) — More than 1,500 Israeli army reserve officers, including 216 generals and colonels, published an open letter Sunday calling on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to save the teetering peace process by handing over more land to the Palestinians.

"An historic chance for peace could slip through our fingers and lead to war or a new intifada (Palestinian uprising) if the Israeli government does not pursue the peace process launched by the Oslo accords and carry out required troop withdrawals" from the West Bank, the letter said.

The officers said that "only true peace can bring security" to Israel and they warned Mr.

Netanyahu against a policy of "preferring to keep Jewish settlements [in Palestinian areas] rather than reaching a peace settlement."

"We believe that in these times when there is an opportunity to achieve peace it is our duty to call on you to avoid steps which could be a disaster for generations to come," said the letter, signed by 1,554 reserve army officers and published in most Israeli newspapers.

The signatories included former army chief of staff Tzvi Tsur, 52 generals and a former national police chief, Joseph Namihas.

The petition was sent to Mr. Netanyahu to mark the 20th anniversary of a similar letter submitted in March 1978 to

then Prime Minister Menachem Begin calling on him to respond to peace overtures from Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.

The next year Begin and Sadat signed Israel's first peace treaty with an Arab state.

Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations have been deadlocked for a year, largely due to Mr. Netanyahu's failure to carry out promised troop withdrawals from the West Bank or to halt construction of Jewish settlements in disputed areas.

Mr. Netanyahu for his part has accused the Palestinians of violating signed peace accords by failing to rein in armed militant groups responsible for killing scores of Israelis.

Sudan calls for improved U.S. ties

KHARTOUM (R) — A Sudanese foreign ministry official said in remarks published on Sunday that Sudan and the United States should work on improving diplomatic relations.

Hassan Abdin, foreign ministry director of foreign relations, made the remarks on Saturday after a meeting of the ministry's advisory council.

"The meeting affirmed the necessity of improving relations between Sudan

and the United States and their development in all fields, especially politically, economically and culturally," the private Al Rai Al Asam newspaper quoted Mr. Abdin as saying.

It said he called for dialogue between the two countries. It was not immediately clear whether any steps would be taken to start talks.

The U.S. in 1993 put Sudan on a list of countries it says support international

terrorism. Ties deteriorated in last November when the United States imposed economic sanctions on Sudan, accusing it of human rights violations and sponsoring international terrorism.

Sudan has denied the charges and says the U.S. is punishing it for the Islamist orientation of its government and for its independent foreign and domestic policies.

Student group leads campaign for openness in Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — The largest student group in Iran vowed on Sunday to press for political openness in the Islamic republic in line with President Mohammad Khatami's vision of a law-abiding "civil society."

Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat (Strengthening Solidarity Office) (EDS: correct) is a left-leaning Islamic movement which supports the 1979 Islamic revolution, but is opposed to the powerful conservative faction of the Islamist regime, calling it "monopolist and undemocratic."

The organisation, the most active of all university groups, is made up of members of Islamic associations in universities and enjoys some support among students as well as professionals.

It staged a demonstration last week, taking advantage of the relative freedom under Mr. Khatami's government, where several thousand people turned up to protest the rejection of sev-

eral leftist hopefuls for a legislative by-election on Friday.

But a group of right-wing Islamic vigilantes, calling themselves Hizbollah, attacked the rally, leaving several people injured and scores more arrested.

Three members of the Daftar's (EDS: correct) central committee, appearing at a rare press conference on Sunday, condemned the attack and accused the police of helping the hardliners.

"Some groups want rallies to turn violent to show that the society is not ready for legal protests," said one of the three Amir Mir Damadi. "Khatami's political rivals want to put pressure on Khatami's government."

Mr. Khatami, a moderate cleric who was elected in a landslide in May against a conservative rival, has promised greater personal and political freedom as well as the rule of law in line with his

vision of an "Islamic civil society."

Since taking office, he has somewhat loosened strict regulations and eased press censorship. It was the first time the left-wing Daftar was allowed a press conference, also attended by foreign journalists.

Mr. Mir Damadi pledged to continue the "campaign for democracy and the rule of law through legal channels because we are opposed to portraying a violent, irrational and unattractive image of the Islamic republic."

"We will have many more such demonstrations and protests in line with the motto of President Khatami," he said.

The movement said it had decided not to take part in the upcoming polls, angry over the rejection of its candidate Ebrahim Asgar Zadeh by the Council of the Guardians, but stressed that "we will not call for

a general boycott."

It particularly objected to a recently-attached amendment which allows for a tighter screening of aspirants by the council, a watchdog Islamic and constitutional body dominated by conservative clerics.

"We will not take part in a biased and unfair election but do not seek to impose our views," Mr. Mir Damadi said, charging that the amendment, adopted two years ago, "seeks to restrict participation" in elections.

He also criticised the police, which is not controlled by Mr. Khatami, for failing to protect them from attacks during the rally last week in front of Tehran University.

"First they just stood watching; then they started cooperating with the agitators, none of whom were arrested," the activist said, charging that several sympathisers of his group were temporarily detained.

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